THE WORLD'S THOUSAND BEST SHORT STORIES

XV
AMERICAN

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" O. Henry "
(William Sidney Porter)

THE

Masterpiece Library of Short Stories

The Thousand Best Complete Tales of all Times and all Countries

Selected by

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OF EMINENT CRITICS

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Carl Van Doren
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Edited by

Sir J. A. Hammerton

XV. AMERICAN

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Editorial Note

A SHORT story may be a mere anecdote of three hundred words or a work of ten or fifteen thousand. In content it may be anything from a glimpse of character, an incident, to a highly finished picture of life. But it should be a complete work of imagination, its effect achieved with a minimum of personages and events.

TO select the best thousand examples was a task that could be achieved only on arbitrary lines. As to length, three thousand words was the ideal average, but this excluded some of the finest stories, so exceptions had to be allowed. National characteristics also had consideration. Another test was the value of a story as illustrating the development of the art.

PROBLEMS of arrangement were not entirely solved by classification according to the country of each writer's origin. This puts Richard Steele into the Irish volume and separates those ideal literary partners Agnes and Egerton Castle. But it is the best possible arrangement for the work, and the index makes reference easy. The inclusion of a series of stories of the War became possible when the War itself ruled out all modern German work.

A WORD as to the method of selection. The General Editor prepared a trial list of titles which were submitted to all the members of the Editorial Board, who rejected and added according to their individual tastes and knowledge. These individual lists were then collated and the final list evolved. The thousand stories selected are therefore representative of the combined opinion of the whole group of editors. A very few modifications of the final list were made necessary by difficulties of copyright and considerations of Anglo-Saxon taste in certain translations from foreign literatures.

MOST of the foreign stories have been specially translated, and all copyrights, in both stories and translations, the use of which authors and publishers have courteously permitted, are duly credited at the end of each volume.

J. A. H.

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AMERICAN STORY-TELLERS

From George W. Curtis to Henry James

By writers born during the second quarter of the nineteenth century the short story, which in the hands of Poe had come to be established as a characteristic manifestation of American literature, was cultivated assiduously in varied fashion, and with very considerable success. If not always at the high level of Poe, the writers of this period make some remarkable contributions to our collection of the thousand of the world's best short stories. Sometimes by the quality of their matter, sometimes by the quality of their manner, and not infrequently by that close union of the two which characterises the short story at its finest, does their work claim inclusion among the thousand best short stories. In the period covered by the writers represented in this volume one of the most noticeable developments is that of the utilisation of the humorous, the ludicrous or the farcical as a short-story motive, and that in the most diverse ways to the one great end of entertainment. There are masters of this fascinating form of fiction who render it in terms of dainty comedy, there are others who do so in that grave form of exaggeration which was long looked upon as being peculiar to American humour, while the last writer but one of the present period carries the Poesque presentation of the weird and the terrible even a stage farther than did that master of the grimly grotesque.

GEORGE W. CURTIS

George William Curtis (1824–1892) was a traveller, essayist, and fiction writer who proved himself a very capable exponent of the art of the short story. Gifted with a polished style and a certain tender gaiety of humour his work was long associated with the best traditions of American periodical literature. In the delicate story of "Titbottom's Spectacles," by which he is here represented, may be recognised the individual charm of his work, the delicate atmosphere of sympathy and humour in which he sets his scenes and characters. The part mystical, delicately satirical, record of the possession of a pair of spectacles which served to reveal people as they were in their essential

qualities has about it a quiet and almost poetic attraction. Once read, the story becomes an abiding memory.

BAYARD TAYLOR

Like his immediate contemporary, Curtis, James Bayard Taylor (1825–1878) was known as a writer of records of personal travel before he came to be recognised as a clever fictionist, while he was also a poet of considerable, and a translator of rare, gifts. It is not necessary here—where we are primarily interested in him as one of the writers of the finest of the world's short stories—to give even a summary list of his voluminous works. As a short-story writer this very versatile man is capitally represented by "Who was She?" This is a tale which by a consensus of critical opinion is generally regarded as the best example of his work in this form. The story is one in which the question put in the title is not answered, but it is one which is curiously impressive. Though Bayard Taylor as a writer of fiction was more successful in description than in characterisation, his unintroduced heroine of this tale is yet made very real to the reader; she is perhaps especially remarkable as a seemingly prophetic presentation of a type of woman who might be labelled "mysterious" in Bayard Taylor's time, but who became better known to a later generation—the woman who resented being talked "down" to by her male companions. If, as a rule, a mystery should be solved before its story is ended, "Who was She?" may be regarded as a brilliant exception.

J. W. DE FOREST—JOHN T. TROWBRIDGE

Contrasting greatly in subject and treatment with the work of Bayard Taylor, but not less markedly successful as an example of the art of short-story telling, is the highly diverting account of the doings of "An Inspired Lobbyist," by John William De Forest (1826–1906). De Forest was the author of several novels which enjoyed considerable success with American readers. The capital story by which he is represented in this volume shows that in the short-story form he achieved a success worthy of far wider appreciation. It is a droll piece of satire concerning the way of political wire-pulling in America, showing how Mr. Ananias Pulwool attained his own particular financial ends by playing upon the cupidity and vanity of the people of two rival towns. The story is one that bears decided evidence of the influence of Charles Dickens in the manner of its telling, and conveys a lesson which must have made some readers a little suspicious when they found a seemingly disinterested person taking active part in a matter in which he had no licit concern.

Something of a contrast in self-seeking is afforded by the example chosen to represent the work of John Townsend Trowbridge (1827–1916), who enjoyed considerable popularity as poet, novelist, and writer for the young. He is represented here by what may be described as being in many respects an eminently characteristic American short story. It is perhaps especially so in its arriding and curiosity-provoking title—"The Man who Stole a Meeting-House." Absurd! It could not be! It does not quite mean what it says!

Such are the comments likely to be raised by those who see the title for the first time. Yet the story shows how the unbelievable deed was accomplished—and what befell the stealer. It does so, too, in a way which suggests that the exploit was not really so very difficult after all—given the right circumstances and the desire to perpetrate the theft. For whosoever chooses to look for a moral, one may surely be found in this form : If you *do* steal a meeting-house don't try to take a ride in the steeple.

W. J. STILLMAN

One of the triumphs of animal presentation in story form is that of William James Stillman (1828–1901), who wrote the beautiful story of his two pets "Billy and Hans," which finds a fitting place in this selection, while acting as special correspondent for *The Times* in Rome. In a simple touching narrative of friendship for his two tame squirrels the American author has told with rare success a story of animal life which is engaging by those qualities of naturalness and sympathy which are too often lacking in attempts of a similar kind. It is one of the triumphs of animal presentation in story form. "Billy and Hans" are likely to live on in this tender record long after their author's volumes on travel and history have merged in the crowded shelves of half-forgotten books.

THOMAS A. BURKE—J. F. KELLY

Thomas A. Burke (b. 1828) is a writer who has had scant justice done to him in that his delightful story of "Polly Peablossom's Wedding" has been frequently credited to one John B. Lamar. It is possible that such may have been a pseudonym at one time employed by Burke, for particulars of his life do not appear to have been recorded beyond the fact that he published a book with the name of *Polly Peablossom's Wedding* in Philadelphia, and one on *Political Fortune-Telling* in New York. The amusing story of the wedding which was in imminent danger of having to be postponed and was then celebrated in most unconventional fashion ; and the pleasant episode of "'Doing' a Sheriff" certainly prove him to have been a capital story-teller.

Not less excellent as a master of his craft was Jonathan F. Kelly (*circa* 1830), the author of "A Desperate Race." He was a writer of many stories over various pseudonyms, who in 1856 published, under the title of *The Memoirs of Falconbridge*, a collection of what he described as humorous and everyday scenes. Of his talent as a raconteur the wonderful story here given is a good example. It is, furthermore, a good example of the American yarn consisting of a "piling up of the agony" to a grand climax—or anticlimax ; certainly in this instance a sufficiently ludicrous one.

FITZ-JAMES O'BRIEN

Something of the same grave exaggeration, but leading to a very different close, is shown in the story by Fitz-James O'Brien (1828–1862), who though he was an Irishman by birth and education not unfittingly

ranks as an American author, for he went to the United States as a young man of twenty-four, and wrote there most of the stories and poems by which he is remembered ; and he died of wounds which he had received as a soldier fighting on behalf of the Union early in the American Civil War. His story of "The Diamond Lens," which is here given, is one that best represents his peculiar power and originality as a writer of imaginative fiction ; displaying extraordinary ingenuity in the rendering of realistic impressions from marvellous imaginings. The story of the impossible is here made vividly actual for a reading-while, and we find ourselves accepting the wonderful sequence of events from the making of the "universal lens" to the tragic romance of two worlds which follows upon its completion. The writer was possessed of something akin to Poe's grim power of presenting the morbidly marvellous.

The marvellous that is of a less incredible kind is that which inspired Noah Brooks (1830–1903), who was the author of a number of excellent short stories, and was more especially successful in those connected with the romance of the sea. In his "Lost in the Fog" we have an interesting and convincing variant of the strange discovery of a group of people left forgotten in an isolated corner, apart from their fellows, and wholly unaware of what has been going on in the outer world. The short narrative of the voyage of the *Lively Polly*, telling how that small vessel, after drifting about in a sea-fog, makes land at length at a place the inhabitants of which are still flying a flag that had been for forty years superseded, is a pleasant reminder of the fact that romance may be happened upon quite near at hand—and also that when we set out on a special search for it we shall probably fail to light upon it again. Samuel Davis (*circa* 1830) in "The First Piano in Camp" proved himself another master of the special trick of many mid-nineteenth-century American short-story writers, the enlisting of the readers' sympathy by a seemingly tender tale which culminates in what may be summed up as the reversal surprise. Having worked up his readers to the verge of tears by the stressing of sentiment, he suddenly indulges in a rapid change to the ridiculous—and the springs of laughter are touched instead of the source of tears.

REBECCA HARDING DAVIS

Quite a different phase of the art of the short story is manifested in the work of Rebecca Harding Davis (1831–1910). She made her name as a writer of earnest purposeful novels, and was regarded as a leader of the school of novelists whose aim was, while entertaining, to instruct, purify, and stir up the pity of her readers for the types of people whom she presented in fictional form. That she could, however, write also in the method of the other school which was first of all concerned with exciting the readers' curiosity is well shown in the story of "Balacchi Brothers," by which she is well represented in this volume. It has been not inaptly described as falling into the three separate categories of love romance, tale of action, and story of character, and as excelling in each. Within the compass of a short story it brings as much as a

less skilful writer would have needed a volume to present, and it does so, it may be added, without any suggestion of undue compression in the narration. Of its particular type it may be regarded as being a peculiarly successful example.

FRANK R. STOCKTON

Though Francis Richard Stockton (1834–1902) was hailed as one having "a heaven-sent mission to be writing for children," yet he proved himself no less gifted in devising literary entertainment for children of a larger growth. This was abundantly shown in his *Rudder Grange* as well as in other books which occupy a high place in American fiction. His peculiar gift of amusing with "a flickering twinkle of smiles" is here well illustrated by three examples of his consummate art as a teller of short stories. "Mr. Tolman" is a delightfully imagined tale of a wealthy business man who takes a most unconventional holiday, in the course of which he plays providence to a young couple, and then returns, very much the better for his experience. There is something of a Dickens-blending of sweet humanity and tender humanity in the narrative. "The Transferred Ghost" is a most whimsical combination of ghost story and love romance. Then, an acknowledged classic of its particular kind, there is "The Lady, or the Tiger!" Deliciously and perennially provoking as an example of the stories which end as they begin on a note of interrogation, this tale is one of the triumphs of the art of rendering the much in little which is the province of the short story.

HARRIET E. P. SPOFFORD

How variously that art has been rendered by American writers is strikingly illustrated in the remarkable story of "The Mount of Sorrow." Harriet Elizabeth Prescott Spofford (1835–1921) displayed in much of her work in fiction a note of high-falutin style and a kind of exaggerated romance by no means common among the more notable of American authors. Some of her work almost suggests a recrudescence of the literary spirit which produced *The Mysteries of Udolpho* and other tenebrous novels of an earlier period. If something of that gloomy romanticism is to be found in "The Mount of Sorrow," with its background suggestion of a sinister gloom that is not altogether dissipated by the close of the story, yet the gift of the narrator lifts that story from the fantastic to the impressive.

MARK TWAIN

Most widely known by his pen-name of Mark Twain, Samuel Langhorne Clemens (1835–1910) is by general consent looked upon as the peculiarly typical American humorist expressing himself through the medium of fiction. He stands as a master of the genial fun to be made alike out of the wildest exaggeration and out of mock seriousness in which as it were but a slight inflection shows the humorous intent. The two stories of his which are given here admirably represent his particularly quaint drollery as a story-teller. In the first of them, "The Celebrated Jumping Frog of Calaveras County," we have the ludicrous story which gave its title to the first volume of Mark Twain's

that was published, one which may be described as having at once established its author's reputation as a humorist on both sides of the Atlantic. In "The Man who put up at Gadsby's" we have another, but a very different, instance of the tale told to an enforced listener. The story is one that conveys in its diverting fashion shrewd comment on the dilatory ways of Government. Both stories serve to illustrate their author's skill as a raconteur, and to exemplify the short story as a vehicle of humour.

THOMAS BAILEY ALDRICH

Very different in his method is Thomas Bailey Aldrich (1836–1907), "an artist to his finger-tips," who won equal fame as poet and writer of fiction, in the form both of novels and of short stories, in which with his quietly manifested humour, his tender playfulness, and clear style of narrative he may be looked upon as excelling. The three stories by which he is here represented are eminently characteristic of his ingeniously inventive fancy and his quietly humourous development of a situation up to an entirely unexpected end that shall give something of a shock of surprise to the reader. In "Marjorie Daw" the author develops a pretty little romance in the form of letters—an old-time device in novels, but unusual within the circumscribed limits of a short story—with a climax which causes amusement or resentment according to the temperament of the reader. In "Mademoiselle Olympe Zabriski" the author displays another ingenious romance—leading up to an anticlimax which even the most sentimental reader is little likely to resent. Then, too, in "Our New Neighbours at Ponkapog" we are once again, though in a wholly different fashion, ingeniously misled into believing one thing while the teller of the story is really putting before us another. Readers who "like to see how it finishes" before they begin to read a story, lose all the charm if they indulge their pernicious practice in reading these stories of Thomas Bailey Aldrich.

BRET HARTE

Francis Bret Harte (1839–1902) is one of the greatest masters of the art of short-story writing that America has produced, a fact which was recognised by many critics on the publication of *The Luck of Roaring Camp and Other Sketches* in 1870. His Californian tales, it was promptly found, possessed, quite apart from their interest as works of fiction, a quality of truth which if not literal is better than much which passes for historical truth; they preserve with convincing faithfulness a transitory phase of the civilisation of Western America. The five of the best of those tales, which are included in this volume, display at once the author's humour—of which tenderness was no small part—and his wonderful descriptive ability. "Tennessee's Partner" is a story of rough life and rough justice in a mining community that was a law unto itself, and of one "pardner's" devotion to another, in life and in death, which is deeply touching. "Miggles" is a graphic account of a stage-coach load of people held up in the wilds at night by tempest, who seek refuge at a lonely place inhabited by the delightful young woman, Miggles, and her hopeless derelict,

Jim. In it are well displayed the writer's gifts of vivid description, lively humour, and tender sympathy. "The Luck of Roaring Camp" is the memorable account of the birth and death of a baby-waif in a mining camp, with which Bret Harte won instant fame as a writer of short stories. "The Outcasts of Poker Flat," telling the tragic story of a small group of "outcasts" snowed up in the mountains between Poker Flat and Sandy Bar, is a powerful and unforgettable tale of unexpected heroism; while "The Idyl of Red Gulch" displays the author's power in the delineation of strong, lovable womanhood. It is not to be wondered at that Bret Harte influenced a number of his younger contemporaries, and George Brooke (*circa* 1840) in the amusing record of "How Angels got Religion" showed himself no mean disciple of the greater writer in his delineation of the lawless humours of a Californian mining centre. The story develops, simply and naturally, one of those surprises which many American writers of short stories delight in springing on their readers.

Preacher, traveller, and writer of a treatise on the horse, William Henry Harrison Murray (1840–1904) proved himself worthy of inclusion among the goodly company of the world's best short-story writers by his vivid and remarkable narrative of "A Ride with a Mad Horse in a Freight-Car." The writer of "Kirby's Coals of Fire," Louise Stockton (*circa* 1840), hit upon an amusing situation for her story, and made effective use of it. As put into the mouth of a canal boatman, and told to a theological student, the tale is sufficiently diverting both for the contrast between the unsophisticated teller and his listener, and for the neat turn given by Kirby to the words about heaping coals of fire on one's head.

MAX ADELER

Another farcical humorist, one of a more boisterous type than Mark Twain, arose in Charles Heber Clark (1841–1915), who came to be known to fame as a humorist by his pen-name of Max Adeler. In 1874 by the publication of *Out of the Hurly-Burly; or, Life in an Odd Corner* he at once took a leading place among those American masters of fiction who delighted in the droll, in the presenting of ludicrous exaggeration in a more or less matter-of-fact fashion. In "A Desperate Adventure" he is seen in one of his less extravagantly devised stories, telling with considerable ingenuity of the way in which four people who were most determinately decided upon committing suicide set out upon a journey from which they returned newly reconciled to life.

GEORGE A. TOWNSEND

Very considerable skill as master of the art of the short story was shown by George Alfred Townsend (1841–1914), a skill which he showed in varied fashion in his volume of *Tales of the "Chesapeake."* He is represented here by a very admirable example of his work in the moving record of the brave little cripple, "Crutch the Page," which is a rarely successful example of the touching romance which an artist

may find in the seemingly least promising of materials. Taking a one-time well-known Washington character known as Beau Hickman, the author utilised him as one of the central figures in a tale which one celebrated American critic described as being "good enough for Bret Harte or anybody." There is much indeed that Dickens might have written in the story of Uriel Basil, while Thackeray might have delineated the boy's mother as a pathetic exponent of the gentle art of social make-believe.

AMBROSE BIERCE

Ambrose Bierce (1842–?1914) is one of the chief masters of the fearful in fiction. His work is certainly less well known on this side of the Atlantic than it should be, for as a master of the short story he ranges with the best of his countrymen—a peer of Poe in the fantastic and terrible, and of Bret Harte in skill. The half-dozen tales by which he is here represented illustrate his fantastic fashion of dealing with the horrible—whether he is terrible realistic, creepily suggestive of the vague unknown, or hovering on a strange borderline which he seems to have discovered between the horrible and the humorous, as in "My Favourite Murder." "The Man and the Snake" is a weirdly effective rendering of the power of suggestion, even to a tragic end; "The Damned Thing" is another example of this writer's ability to give reality to the vaguely terrible; while "An Occurrence at Owl Creek Bridge," "The Affair at Coulter's Notch," and "A Watcher by the Dead" are further instances of his rare power of making his readers realise the grim things that he has imagined. Something of the strangeness with which he charged his fiction seems curiously to belong to the end of the author's own life, for he was last definitely heard of as being in Mexico in January 1914.

HENRY JAMES

The period covered by this volume closes with "The Tree of Knowledge," the best example of Henry James's work which can be regarded as coming within the definition of a short story. Most of the short stories by that master of the leisurely method are short only by comparison with his full-length novels, which is a reminder that though the short story is generally looked upon as a form which American authors have cultivated with peculiar excellence, there are some notable American masters of fiction—such as William Dean Howells—who, great though their talents were as novelists, were not successful within the limits of the true short story. And this brings us to a consideration of a change that came over the short story as treated by many American writers, a change which may be summed up as being the result of overmuch attention to the manner of the telling to the neglect of the matter. Yet that many of the writers of the succeeding generation continued to employ this fascinating form of fiction in an effective fashion will be found abundantly illustrated in the succeeding volume, in which are brought together the best short stories produced by the later American writers.

W. J.

GEORGE WM. CURTIS

1824–1892

TITBOTTOM'S SPECTACLES

In my mind's eye, Horatio.—*Hamlet.*

PRUE and I do not entertain much ; our means forbid it. In truth, other people entertain for us. We enjoy that hospitality of which no account is made. We see the show, and hear the music, and smell the flowers, of great festivities, tasting, as it were, the drippings from rich dishes.

Our own dinner service is remarkably plain, our dinners, even on state occasions, are strictly in keeping, and almost our only guest is Titbottom. I buy a handful of roses as I come up from the office, perhaps, and Prue arranges them so prettily in a glass dish for the centre of the table, that even when I have hurried out to see Aurelia step into her carriage to go out to dine, I have thought that the bouquet she carried was not more beautiful because it was more costly.

I grant that it was more harmonious with her superb beauty and her rich attire. And I have no doubt that if Aurelia knew the old man, whom she must have seen so often watching her, and his wife, who ornaments her sex with as much sweetness, although with less splendour, than Aurelia herself, she would also acknowledge that the nosegay of roses was as fine and fit upon their table as her own sumptuous bouquet is for herself. I have so much faith in the perception of that lovely lady.

It is my habit—I hope I may say, my nature—to believe the best of people, rather than the worst. If I thought that all this sparkling setting of beauty—this fine fashion—these blazing jewels, and lustrous silks, and airy gauzes, embellished with gold-threaded embroidery and wrought in a thousand exquisite elaborations, so that I cannot see one of those lovely girls pass me by without thanking God for the vision—if I thought that this was all, and that, underneath her lace flounces and diamond bracelets, Aurelia was a sullen, selfish woman, then I should turn sadly homeward, for I should see that her jewels were flashing scorn upon the object they adorned, that her laces were of a more exquisite loveliness than the woman whom they merely touched with a superficial grace.

It would be like a gaily decorated mausoleum—bright to see, but silent and dark within.

"Great excellences, my dear Prue," I sometimes allow myself to say, "lie concealed in the depths of character, like pearls at the bottom of the sea. Under the laughing, glancing surface, how little they are suspected! Perhaps love is nothing else than the sight of them by one person. Hence every man's mistress is apt to be an enigma to everybody else.

"I have no doubt that, when Aurelia is engaged, people will say she is a most admirable girl, certainly; but they cannot understand why any man should be in love with her. As if it were at all necessary that they should! And her lover, like a boy who finds a pearl in the public street, and wonders as much that others did not see it as that he did, will tremble until he knows his passion is returned; feeling, of course, that the whole world must be in love with this paragon, who cannot possibly smile upon anything so unworthy as he.

"I hope, therefore, my dear Mrs. Prue," I continue, and my wife looks up, with pleased pride, from her work, as if I were such an irresistible humourist, "you will allow me to believe that the depth may be calm although the surface is dancing. If you tell me that Aurelia is but a giddy girl, I shall believe that you think so. But I shall know, all the while, what profound dignity, and sweetness, and peace lie at the foundation of her character."

I say such things to Titbottom during the dull season at the office. And I have known him sometimes to reply, with a kind of dry, sad humour, not as if he enjoyed the joke, but as if the joke must be made, that he saw no reason why I should be dull because the season was so.

"And what do I know of Aurelia, or any other girl?" he says to me with that abstracted air; "I, whose Aurelias were of another century and another zone."

Then he falls into a silence which it seems quite profane to interrupt. But as we sit upon our high stools at the desk, opposite each other, I leaning upon my elbows and looking at him, he, with sidelong face, glancing out of the window, as if it commanded a boundless landscape, instead of a dim, dingy office court, I cannot refrain from saying:

"Well!"

He turns slowly and I go chatting on—a little too loquacious perhaps, about those young girls. But I know that Titbottom regards such an excess as venial, for his sadness is so sweet that you could believe it the reflection of a smile from long, long years ago.

One day, after I had been talking for a long time, and we had put up our books and were preparing to leave, he stood for some time by the window, gazing with a drooping intentness, as if he really saw something more than the dark court, and said slowly:

"Perhaps you would have different impressions of things if you

saw them through my spectacles."

There was no change in his expression. He still looked from the window, and I said:

"Titbottom, I did not know that you used glasses. I have never seen you wearing spectacles."

"No; I don't often wear them. I am not very fond of looking through them. But sometimes an irresistible necessity compels me to put them on, and I cannot help seeing."

Titbottom sighed.

"Is it so grievous a fate to see?" inquired I.

"Yes; through my spectacles," he said, turning slowly, and looking at me with wan solemnity.

It grew dark as we stood in the office talking, and, taking our hats, we went out together. The narrow street of business was deserted. The heavy iron shutters were gloomily closed over the windows. From one or two offices struggled the dim gleam of an early candle, by whose light some perplexed accountant sat belated, and hunting for his error. A careless clerk passed, whistling. But the great tide of life had ebbed. We heard its roar far away, and the sound stole into that silent street like the murmur of the ocean into an inland dell.

"You will come and dine with us, Titbottom?"

He assented by continuing to walk with me, and I think we were both glad when we reached the house and Prue came to meet us, saying:

"Do you know I hoped you would bring Mr. Titbottom to dine?"

Titbottom smiled gently, and answered:

"He might have brought his spectacles with him, and have been a happier man for it."

Prue looked a little puzzled.

"My dear," I said, "you must know that our friend, Mr. Titbottom, is the happy possessor of a pair of wonderful spectacles. I have never see them, indeed; and, from what he says, I should be rather afraid of being seen by them. Most short-sighted persons are very glad to have the help of glasses; but Mr. Titbottom seems to find very little pleasure in his."

"It is because they make him too far-sighted, perhaps," interrupted Prue quietly, as she took the silver soup-ladle from the sideboard.

We sipped our wine after dinner, and Prue took her work. Can a man be too far-sighted? I did not ask the question aloud. The very tone in which Prue had spoken, convinced me that he might.

"At least," I said, "Mr. Titbottom will not refuse to tell us the history of his mysterious spectacles. I have known plenty of magic in eyes" (and I glanced at the tender blue eyes of Prue), "but I have not heard of any enchanted glasses."

"Yet you must have seen the glass in which your wife looks every

morning, and, I take it, that glass must be daily enchanted." said Titbottom, with a bow of quaint respect to my wife.

I do not think I have seen such a blush upon Prue's cheek since—well, since a great many years ago.

"I will gladly tell you the history of my spectacles," began Titbottom. "It is very simple; and I am not at all sure that a great many other people have not a pair of the same kind. I have never, indeed, heard of them by the gross, like those of our young friend, Moses, the son of the Vicar of Wakefield. In fact, I think a gross would be quite enough to supply the world. It is a kind of article for which the demand does not increase with use. If we should all wear spectacles like mine we should never smile any more. Or—I am not quite sure—we should all be very happy."

"A very important difference," said Prue, counting her stitches.

"You know my grandfather Titbottom was a West Indian. A large proprietor, and an easy man, he basked in the tropical sun, leading his quiet, luxurious life. He lived much alone, and was what people call eccentric—by which I understand that he was very much himself, and, refusing the influence of other people, they had their revenges, and called him names. It is a habit not exclusively tropical. I think I have seen the same thing even in this city.

"But he was greatly beloved—my bland and bountiful grandfather. He was so large-hearted and open-handed. He was so friendly, and thoughtful, and genial, that even his jokes had the air of graceful benedictions. He did not seem to grow old, and he was one of those who never appear to have been very young. He flourished in a perennial maturity, an immortal middle-age.

"My grandfather lived upon one of the small islands—St. Kitts, perhaps—and his domain extended to the sea. His house, a rambling West Indian mansion, was surrounded with deep, spacious piazzas, covered with luxurious lounges, among which one capacious chair was his peculiar seat. They tell me he used sometimes to sit there for the whole day, his great, soft, brown eyes fastened upon the sea, watching the specks of sails that flashed upon the horizon, while the evanescent expressions chased each other over his placid face, as if it reflected the calm and changing sea before him.

"His morning costume was an ample dressing-gown of gorgeously-flowered silk, and his morning was very apt to last all day. He rarely read; but he would pace the great piazza for hours, with his hands buried in the pockets of his dressing-gown, and an air of sweet reverie, which any book must be a very entertaining one to produce.

"Society, of course, he saw little. There was some slight apprehension that, if he were bidden to social entertainments, he might forget his coat, or arrive without some other essential part of his dress; and there is a sly tradition in the Titbottom family, that once, having been invited to a ball in honour of a new governor of the island, my

grandfather Titbottom sauntered into the hall towards midnight, wrapped in the gorgeous flowers of his dressing-gown, and with his hands buried in the pockets, as usual. There was great excitement among the guests and immense deprecation of gubernatorial ire. Fortunately, it happened that the Governor and my grandfather were old friends, and there was no offence. But as they were conversing together, one of the distressed managers cast indignant glances at the brilliant costume of my grandfather, who summoned him, and asked courteously :

" ' Did you invite me, or my coat ? '

" ' You, in a proper coat,' replied the manager.

" The Governor smiled approvingly, and looked at my grandfather.

" ' My friend,' said he to the manager, ' I beg your pardon, I forgot.'

" The next day, my grandfather was seen promenading in full ball dress along the streets of the little town.

" ' They ought to know,' said he, ' that I have a proper coat, and that not contempt, nor poverty, but forgetfulness, sent me to a ball in my dressing-gown.'

" He did not much frequent social festivals after this failure, but he always told the story with satisfaction and a quiet smile.

" To a stranger, life upon those little islands is uniform even to weariness. But the old native dons, like my grandfather, ripen in the prolonged sunshine, like the turtle upon the Bahama banks, nor know of existence more desirable. Life in the tropics I take to be a placid torpidity.

" During the long, warm mornings of nearly half a century, my grandfather Titbottom had sat in his dressing-gown and gazed at the sea. But one calm June day, as he slowly paced the piazza after breakfast, his dreamy glance was arrested by a little vessel, evidently nearing the shore. He called for his spyglass, and, surveying the craft, saw that she came from the neighbouring island. She glided smoothly, slowly, over the summer sea. The warm morning air was sweet with perfumes and silent with heat. The sea sparkled languidly and the brilliant blue sky hung cloudlessly over. Scores of little island vessels had my grandfather seen coming over the horizon and cast anchor in the port. Hundreds of summer mornings had the white sails flashed and faded, like vague faces through forgotten dreams. But this time he laid down the spyglass, and leaned against a column of the piazza, and watched the vessel with an intentness that he could not explain. She came nearer and nearer, a graceful spectre in the dazzling morning.

" ' Decidedly I must step down and see about that vessel,' said my grandfather Titbottom.

" He gathered his ample dressing-gown about him, and stepped from the piazza with no other protection from the sun than the little

smoking-cap upon his head. His face wore a calm, beaming smile, as if he loved the whole world. He was not an old man ; but there was almost a patriarchal pathos in his expression as he sauntered along in the sunshine towards the shore. A group of idle gazers was collected to watch the arrival. The little vessel furled her sails and drifted slowly landward, and as she was of very light draft, she came close to the shelving shore. A long plank was put out from her side, and the debarkation commenced.

" My grandfather Titbottom stood looking on, to see the passengers as they passed. There were but a few of them, and mostly traders from the neighbouring island. But suddenly the face of a young girl appeared over the side of the vessel, and she stepped upon the plank to descend. My grandfather Titbottom instantly advanced, and, moving briskly, reached the top of the plank at the same moment, and with the old tassel of his cap flashing in the sun, and one hand in the pocket of his dressing-gown, with the other he handed the young lady carefully down the plank. That young lady was afterwards my grandmother Titbottom.

" For, over the gleaming sea which he had watched so long, and which seemed thus to reward his patient gaze, came his bride that sunny morning.

" ' Of course we are happy,' he used to say to her, after they were married : ' for you are the gift of the sun I have loved so long and so well.' And my grandfather Titbottom would lay his hand so tenderly upon the golden hair of his young bride, that you could fancy him a devout Parsee, caressing sunbeams.

" There were endless festivities upon occasion of the marriage ; and my grandfather did not go to one of them in his dressing-gown. The gentle sweetness of his wife melted every heart into love and sympathy. He was much older than she, without doubt. But age, as he used to say with a smile of immortal youth, is a matter of feeling, not of years.

" And if, sometimes, as she sat by his side on the piazza, her fancy looked through her eyes upon that summer sea, and saw a younger lover, perhaps some one of those graceful and glowing heroes who occupy the foreground of all young maidens' visions by the sea, yet she could not find one more generous and gracious, nor fancy one more worthy and loving than my grandfather Titbottom.

" And if, in the moonlit midnight, while he lay calmly sleeping, she leaned out of the window, and sank into vague reveries of sweet possibility, and watched the gleaming path of the moonlight upon the water, until the dawn glided over it—it was only that mood of nameless regret and longing which underlies all human happiness ; or it was the vision of that life of cities and the world which she had never seen, but of which she had often read, and which looked

very fair and alluring across the sea to a girlish imagination, which knew that it should never see that reality.

"These West Indian years were the great days of the family." said Titbottom, with an air of majestic and regal regret, pausing, and musing, in our little parlour, like a late Stuart in exile, remembering England.

Prue raised her eyes from her work and looked at him with subdued admiration; for I have observed that, like the rest of her sex, she has a singular sympathy with the representative of a reduced family.

Perhaps it is their finer perception, which leads these tender-hearted women to recognise the divine right of social superiority so much more readily than we; and yet, much as Titbottom was enhanced in my wife's admiration by the discovery that his dusky sadness of nature and expression was, as it were, the expiring gleam and late twilight of ancestral splendours, I doubt if Mr. Bourne would have preferred him for book-keeper a moment sooner upon that account. In truth, I have observed, down town, that the fact of your ancestors doing nothing is not considered good proof that you can do anything.

But Prue and her sex regard sentiment more than action, and I understand easily enough why she is never tired of hearing me read of Prince Charlie. If Titbottom had been only a little younger, a little handsomer, a little more gallantly dressed—in fact, a little more of a Prince Charlie, I am sure her eyes would not have fallen again upon her work so tranquilly, as he resumed his story.

"I can remember my grandfather Titbottom, although I was a very young child and he was a very old man. My young mother and my young grandmother are very distinct figures in my memory, ministering to the old gentleman, wrapped in his dressing-gown, and seated upon the piazza. I remember his white hair and his calm smile, and how, not long before he died, he called me to him, and laying his hand upon my head, said to me:

"'My child, the world is not this great sunny piazza, nor life the fairy stories which the women tell you here, as you sit in their laps. I shall soon be gone, but I want to leave with you some memento of my love for you, and I know of nothing more valuable than these spectacles, which your grandmother brought from her native island, when she arrived here one fine summer morning, long ago. I cannot tell whether, when you grow older, you will regard them as a gift of the greatest value, or as something that you had been happier never to have possessed.'

"'But, grandpapa, I am not short-sighted.'

"'My son, are you not human?' said the old gentleman; and how shall I ever forget the thoughtful sadness with which, at the same time, he handed me the spectacles?

"Instinctively I put them on, and looked at my grandfather.

But I saw no grandfather, no piazza, no flowered dressing-gown; I saw only a luxuriant palm-tree, waving broadly over a tranquil landscape; pleasant homes clustered around it; gardens teeming with fruit and flowers; flocks quietly feeding; birds wheeling and chirping. I heard children's voices, and the low lullaby of happy mothers. The sound of cheerful singing came wafted from distant fields upon the light breeze. Golden harvest glistened out of sight, and I caught their rustling whispers of prosperity. A warm, mellow atmosphere bathed the whole.

"I have seen copies of the landscapes of the Italian painter Claude, which seemed to me faint reminiscences of that calm and happy vision. But all this peace and prosperity seemed to flow from the spreading palm as from a fountain.

"I do not know how long I looked, but I had, apparently, no power, as I had no will, to remove the spectacles. What a wonderful island must Nevis be, thought I, if people carry such pictures in their pockets only by buying a pair of spectacles! What wonder that my dear grandmother Titbottom has lived such a placid life, and has blessed us all with her sunny temper, when she has lived surrounded by such images of peace!

"My grandfather died. But still, in the warm morning sunshine upon the piazza, I felt his placid presence, and as I crawled into his great chair, and drifted on in reverie through the still, tropical day, it was as if his soft, dreamy eye had passed into my soul. My grandmother cherished his memory with tender regret. A violent passion of grief for his loss was no more possible than for the pensive decay of the year.

"We have no portrait of him, but I see always, when I remember him, that peaceful and luxuriant palm. And I think that to have known one good old man—one man who, through the chances and rubs of a long life, has carried his heart in his hand, like a palm branch, waving all discords into peace—helps our faith in God, in ourselves, and in each other more than many sermons. I hardly know whether to be grateful to my grandfather for the spectacles; and yet when I remember that it is to them I owe the pleasant image of him which I cherish, I seem to myself sadly ungrateful.

"Madam," said Titbottom to Prue solemnly, "my memory is a long and gloomy gallery, and only remotely, at its farther end, do I see the glimmer of soft sunshine, and only there are the pleasant pictures hung. They seem to me very happy along whose gallery the sunlight streams to their very feet, striking all the pictured walls into unfading splendour."

Prue had laid her work in her lap, and as Titbottom paused a moment, and I turned towards her, I found her mild eyes fastened upon my face, and glistening with many tears. I knew that the tears meant that she felt herself to be one of those who seemed to Titbottom very happy.

" Misfortunes of many kinds came heavily upon the family after the head was gone. The great house was relinquished. My parents were both dead, and my grandmother had entire charge of me. But from the moment that I received the gift of the spectacles I could not resist their fascination, and I withdrew into myself and became a solitary boy. There were not many companions for me of my own age, and they gradually left me, or, at least, had not a hearty sympathy with me ; for, if they teased me, I pulled out my spectacles and surveyed them so seriously that they acquired a kind of awe of me, and evidently regarded my gradfather's gift as a concealed magical weapon which might be dangerously drawn upon them at any moment. Whenever in our games there were quarrels and high words, and I began to feel about my dress and to wear a grave look, they all took the alarm, and shouted, ' Look out for Titbottom's spectacles,' and scattered like a flock of scared sheep.

" Nor could I wonder at it. For, at first, before they took the alarm, I saw strange sights when I looked at them through the glasses.

" If two were quarrelling about a marble or a ball I had only to go behind a tree where I was concealed and look at them leisurely. Then the scene changed, and it was no longer a green meadow with boys playing, but a spot which I did not recognise, and forms that made me shudder, or smile. It was not a big boy bullying a little one, but a young wolf with glistening teeth and a lamb cowering before him ; or it was a dog faithful and famishing —or a star going slowly into eclipse—or a rainbow fading—or a flower blooming—or a sun rising—or a waning moon.

" The revelations of the spectacles determined my feeling for the boys, and for all whom I saw through them. No shyness, nor awkwardness, nor silence could separate me from those who looked lovely as lilies to my illuminated eyes. But the visions made me afraid. If I felt myself warmly drawn to any one, I struggled with the fierce desire of seeing him through the spectacles, for I feared to find him something else than I fancied. I longed to enjoy the luxury of ignorant feeling, to love without knowing, to float like a leaf upon the eddies of life, drifted now to a sunny point, now to a solemn shade—now over glittering ripples, now over gleaming calms—and not to determined ports, a trim vessel with an inexorable rudder.

" But sometimes, mastered after long struggles, as if the unavoidable condition of owning the spectacles were using them, I seized them and sauntered into the little town. Putting them to my eyes I peered into the houses and at the people who passed me. Here sat a family at breakfast, and I stood at the window looking in. O motley meal ! fantastic vision ! The good mother saw her lord sitting opposite, a grave, respectable being, eating muffins.

But I saw only a bank-bill, more or less crumpled and tattered, marked with a larger or lesser figure. If a sharp wind blew suddenly, I saw it tremble and flutter; it was thin, flat, impalpable. I removed my glasses and looked with my eyes at the wife. I could have smiled to see the humid tenderness with which she regarded her strange *vis-à-vis*. Is life only a game of blindman's buff? of droll cross purposes?

"Or I put them on again, and then looked at the wives. How many stout trees I saw—how many tender flowers—how many placid pools; yes, and how many little streams winding out of sight shrinking before the large, hard, round eyes opposite and slipping off into solitude and shade, with a low, inner song for their own solace.

"In many houses I thought to see angels, nymphs, or, at least, women, and could only find broomsticks, mops, or kettles, hurrying about, rattling and tinkling, in a state of shrill activity. I made calls upon elegant ladies, and after I had enjoyed the gloss of silk, and the delicacy of lace, and the glitter of jewels, I slipped on my spectacles, and saw a peacock's feather, flounced, and furbelowed and fluttering; or an iron rod, thin, sharp, and hard; nor could I possibly mistake the movement of the drapery for any flexibility of the thing draped.

"Or, mysteriously chilled, I saw a statue of perfect form, or flowing movement, it might be alabaster, or bronze, or marble—but sadly often it was ice; and I knew that after it had shone a little, and frozen a few eyes with its despairing perfection, it could not be put away in the niches of palaces for ornament and proud family tradition, like the alabaster, or bronze, or marble statues, but would melt, and shrink, and fall coldly away in colourless and useless water, be absorbed in the earth and utterly forgotten.

"But the true sadness was rather in seeing those who, not having the spectacles, thought that the iron rod was flexible, and the ice statue warm. I saw many a gallant heart, which seemed to me brave and loyal as the crusaders, pursuing, through days and nights, and a long life of devotion, the hope of lighting at least a smile in the cold eyes, if not a fire in the icy heart. I watched the earnest, enthusiastic sacrifice. I saw the pure resolve, the generous faith, the fine scorn of doubt, the impatience of suspicion. I watched the grace, the ardour, the glory of devotion. Through those strange spectacles how often I saw the noblest heart renouncing all other hope, all other ambition, all other life, than the possible love of some one of those statues.

"Ah me! it was terrible, but they had not the love to give. The face was so polished and smooth, because there was no sorrow in the heart—and drearily, often, no heart to be touched. I could not wonder that the noble heart of devotion was broken, for it had dashed itself against a stone. I wept, until my spectacles were

dimmed, for those hopeless lovers; but there was a pang beyond tears for those icy statues.

"Still a boy, I was thus too much a man in knowledge—I did not comprehend the sights I was compelled to see. I used to tear my glasses away from my eyes and, frightened at myself, run to escape my own consciousness. Reaching the small house where we then lived, I plunged into my grandmother's room, and, throwing myself upon the floor, buried my face in her lap, and sobbed myself to sleep with premature grief.

"But when I awakened, and felt her cool hand upon my hot forehead, and heard the low sweet song, or the gentle story, or the tenderly told parable from the Bible, with which she tried to soothe me, I could not resist the mystic fascination that lured me, as I lay in her lap, to steal a glance at her through the spectacles.

"Pictures of the Madonna have not her rare and pensive beauty. Upon the tranquil little islands her life had been eventless, and all the fine possibilities of her nature were like flowers that never bloomed. Placid were all her years; yet I have read of no heroine, of no woman great in sudden crises, that it did not seem to me she might have been. The wife and widow of a man who loved his home better than the homes of others, I have yet heard of no queen, no belle, no imperial beauty, whom in grace, and brilliancy, and persuasive courtesy she might not have surpassed.

"Madam," said Titbottom to my wife, whose heart hung upon his story, "your husband's young friend, Aurelia, wears sometimes a camellia in her hair, and no diamond in the ballroom seems so costly as that perfect flower, which women envy, and for whose least and withered petal men sigh; yet, in the tropical solitudes of Brazil, how many a camellia bud drops from the bush that no eye has ever seen, which, had it flowered and been noticed, would have gilded all hearts with its memory.

"When I stole these furtive glances at my grandmother, half fearing that they were wrong, I saw only a calm lake, whose shores were low, and over which the sun hung unbroken, so that the least star was clearly reflected. It had an atmosphere of solemn twilight tranquillity, and so completely did its unruffled surface blend with the cloudless, star-studded sky that, when I looked through my spectacles at my grandmother, the vision seemed to me all heaven and stars.

"Yet, as I gazed and gazed, I felt what stately cities might well have been built upon those shores, and have flashed prosperity over the calm, like coruscations of pearls. I dreamed of gorgeous fleets, silken-sailed, and blown by perfumed winds, drifting over those depthless waters and through those spacious skies. I gazed upon the twilight, the inscrutable silence, like a God-fearing discoverer upon a new and vast sea bursting upon him through forest glooms, and in the fervour of whose impassioned gaze a millennial and

poetic world arises, and man need no longer die to be happy.

" My companions naturally deserted me for I had grown wearily grave and abstracted : and, unable to resist the allurements of my spectacles, I was constantly lost in the world of which those companions were part, yet of which they knew nothing.

" I grew cold and hard, almost morose ; people seemed to me so blind and unreasonable. They did the wrong thing. They called green, yellow ; and black, white. Young men said of a girl, ' What a lovely, simple creature ! ' I looked, and there was only a glistening wisp of straw, dry and hollow. Or they said ' What a cold, proud beauty ! ' I looked, and lo ! a Madonna, whose heart held the world. Or they said, ' What a wild, giddy girl ! ' and I saw a glancing, dancing mountain stream, pure as the virgin snows whence it flowed, singing through sun and shade, over pearls and gold dust, slipping along unstained by weed or rain, or heavy foot of cattle, touching the flowers with a dewy kiss—a beam of grace, a happy song, a line of light, in the dim and troubled landscape.

" My grandmother sent me to school, but I looked at the master and saw that he was a smooth, round ferule, or an improper noun, or a vulgar fraction, and refused to obey him. Or he was a piece of string, a rag, a willow-wand, and I had a contemptuous pity. But one was a well of cool, deep water, and looking suddenly in one day I saw the stars.

" That one gave me all my schooling. With him I used to walk by the sea, and, as we strolled and the waves plunged in long legions before us, I looked at him through the spectacles, and as his eyes dilated with the boundless view, and his chest heaved with an impossible desire, I saw Xerxes and his army, tossed and glittering, rank upon rank, multitude upon multitude, out of sight, but ever regularly advancing, and, with confused roar of ceaseless music, prostrating themselves in abject homage. Or, as with arms outstretched and hair streaming on the wind, he chanted full lines of the resounding *Iliad*, I saw Homer pacing the Ægean sands in the Greek sunsets of forgotten times.

" My grandmother died, and I was thrown into the world without resources, and with no capital but my spectacles. I tried to find employment, but everybody was shy of me. There was a vague suspicion that I was either a little crazed, or a good deal in league with the prince of darkness. My companions, who would persist in calling a piece of painted muslin a fair and fragrant flower, had no difficulty ; success waited for them around every corner, and arrived in every ship.

" I tried to teach, for I loved children. But if anything excited a suspicion of my pupils, and putting on my spectacles I saw that I was fondling a snake, or smelling at a bud with a worm in it, I sprang up in horror and ran away ; or if it seemed to me through the glasses that a cherub smiled upon me, or a rose was blooming in

my buttonhole, then I felt myself imperfect and impure, not fit to be leading and training what was so essentially superior to myself, and I kissed the children and left them weeping and wondering.

"In despair I went to a great merchant on the island, and asked him to employ me.

"'My dear young friend,' said he, 'I understand that you have some singular secret, some charm, or spell, or amulet, or something, I don't know what, of which people are afraid. Now you know, my dear,' said the merchant, swelling up, and apparently prouder of his great stomach than of his large fortune, 'I am not of that kind. I am not easily frightened. You may spare yourself the pain of trying to impose upon me. People who propose to come to time before I arrive are accustomed to arise very early in the morning,' said he, thrusting his thumbs in the armholes of his waistcoat, and spreading the fingers, like two fans, upon his bosom. 'I think I have heard something of your secret. You have a pair of spectacles, I believe, that you value very much, because your grandmother brought them as a marriage portion to your grandfather. Now if you think fit to sell me those spectacles I will pay you the largest market price for them. What do you say?'

"I told him I had not the slightest idea of selling my spectacles.

"'My young friend means to eat them, I suppose,' said he, with a contemptuous smile.

"I made no reply, but was turning to leave the office when the merchant called after me:

"'My young friend, poor people should never suffer themselves to get into pets. Anger is an expensive luxury in which only men of a certain income can indulge. A pair of spectacles and a hot temper are not the most promising capital for success in life, Master Titbottom.'

"I said nothing, but put my hand upon the door to go out when the merchant said, more respectfully:

"'Well, you foolish boy, if you will not sell your spectacles, perhaps you will agree to sell the use of them to me. That is, you shall only put them on when I direct you, and for my purposes. Hallo! you little fool!' cried he impatiently, as he saw that I intended to make no reply.

"But I had pulled out my spectacles and put them on for my own purposes, and against his wish and desire. I looked at him, and saw a huge, bald-headed wild boar, with gross chaps and a leering eye—only the more ridiculous for the high-arched, gold bowed spectacles, that straddled his nose. One of his forehoofs was thrust into the safe, where his bills receivable were hived, and the other into his pocket, among the loose change and bills there. His ears were pricked forward with a brisk, sensitive smartness. In a world where prize pork was the best excellence he would have carried off all the premiums.

" I stepped into the next office in the street, and a mild-faced, genial man, also a large and opulent merchant, asked me my business in such a tone that I instantly looked through my spectacles and saw a land flowing with milk and honey. There I pitched my tent, and stayed till the good man died and his business was discontinued.

" But while there," said Titbottom, and his voice trembled away into a sigh, " I first saw Preciosa. Despite the spectacles, I saw Preciosa. For days, for weeks, for months, I did not take my spectacles with me. I ran away from them, I threw them up on high shelves, I tried to make up my mind to throw them into the sea, or down the well. I could not, I would not, I dared not, look at Preciosa through the spectacles. It was not possible for me deliberately to destroy them ; but I awoke in the night, and could almost have cursed my dear old grandfather for his gift.

" I sometimes escaped from the office, and sat for whole days with Preciosa. I told her the strange things I had seen with my mystic glasses. The hours were not enough for the wild romances which I raved in her ear. She listened, astonished and appalled. Her blue eyes turned upon me with sweet deprecation. She clung to me, and then withdrew, and fled fearfully from the room.

" But she could not stay away. She could not resist my voice, in whose tones burnt all the love that filled my heart and brain. The very effort to resist the desire of seeing her as I saw everybody else gave a frenzy and an unnatural tension to my feeling and my manner. I sat by her side, looking into her eyes, smoothing her hair, folding her to my heart, which was sunken deep and deep—why not for ever ?—in that dream of peace. I ran from her presence, and shouted, and leaped with joy, and sat the whole night through, thrilled into happiness by the thought of her love and loveliness, like a wind-harp, tightly strung, and answering the airiest sigh of the breeze with music.

" Then came calmer days—the conviction of deep love settled upon our lives—as after the hurrying, heaving days of spring, comes the bland and benignant summer.

" ' It is no dream, then, after all, and we are happy,' I said to her one day ; and there came no answer, for happiness is speechless.

" ' We are happy, then,' I said to myself, ' there is no excitement now. How glad I am that I can now look at her through my spectacles.'

" I feared lest some instinct should warn me to beware. I escaped from her arms, and ran home and seized the glasses, and bounded back again to Preciosa. As I entered the room I was heated, my head was swimming with confused apprehensions, my eyes must have glared. Preciosa was frightened, and, rising from her seat, stood with an inquiring glance of surprise in her eyes.

" But I was bent with frenzy upon my purpose. I was merely aware that she was in the room. I saw nothing else. I heard nothing.

I cared for nothing but to see her through that magic glass, and feel at once all the fulness of blissful perfection which that would reveal. Preciosa stood before the mirror, but alarmed at my wild and eager movements, unable to distinguish what I had in my hands, and seeing me raise them suddenly to my face, she shrieked with terror, and fell fainting upon the floor, at the very moment that I placed the glasses before my eyes, and beheld—*myself*, reflected in the mirror, before which she had been standing.

"Dear madam," cried Titbottom to my wife, springing up and falling back again in his chair, pale and trembling, while Prue ran to him and took his hand, and I poured out a glass of water—"I saw myself."

There was silence for many minutes. Prue laid her hand gently upon the head of our guest, whose eyes were closed, and who breathed softly like an infant in sleeping. Perhaps, in all the long years of anguish since that hour, no tender hand had touched his brow, nor wiped away the damps of a bitter sorrow. Perhaps the tender, maternal fingers of my wife soothed his weary head with the conviction that he felt the hand of his mother playing with the long hair of her boy in the soft West India morning. Perhaps it was only the natural relief of expressing a pent-up sorrow.

When he spoke again, it was with the old subdued tone, and the air of quaint solemnity.

"These things were matters of long, long ago, and I came to this country soon after. I brought with me premature age, a past of melancholy memories, and the magic spectacles. I had become their slave. I had nothing more to fear. Having seen myself, I was compelled to see others, properly to understand my relations to them. The lights that cheer the future of other men had gone out for me; my eyes were those of an exile turned backwards upon the receding shore, and not forwards with hope upon the ocean.

"I mingled with men, but with little pleasure. There are but many varieties of a few types. I did not find those I came to clearer-sighted than those I had left behind. I heard men called shrewd and wise, and report said they were highly intelligent and successful. My finest sense detected no aroma of purity and principle; but I saw only a fungus that had fattened and spread in a night. They went to the theatres to see actors upon the stage. I went to see actors in the boxes, so consummately cunning that others did not know they were acting, and they did not suspect it themselves.

"Perhaps you wonder it did not make me misanthropical. My dear friends, do not forget that I had seen myself. That made me compassionate, not cynical.

"Of course, I could not value highly the ordinary standards of success and excellence. When I went to church and saw a thin, blue, artificial flower, or a great sleepy cushion expounding the beauty of

holiness to pews full of eagles, half-eagles, and threepences, however adroitly concealed they might be in broadcloth and boots: or saw an onion in an Easter bonnet weeping over the sins of Magdalen, I did not feel as they felt who saw in all this not only propriety but piety.

"Or when at public meetings an eel stood up on end, and wriggled and squirmed lithely in every direction, and declared that, for his part, he went in for rainbows and hot water—how could I help seeing that he was still black and loved a slimy pool?

"I could not grow misanthropical when I saw in the eyes of so many who were called old the gushing fountains of eternal youth, and the light of an immortal dawn, or when I saw those who were esteemed unsuccessful and aimless, ruling a fair realm of peace and plenty, either in their own hearts, or in another's—a realm and princely possession for which they had well renounced a hopeless search and a belated triumph.

"I knew one man who had been for years a byword for having sought the philosopher's stone. But I looked at him through the spectacles and saw a satisfaction in concentrated energies, and a tenacity arising from devotion to a noble dream which was not apparent in the youths who pitied him in the aimless effeminacy of clubs, nor in the clever gentlemen who cracked their thin jokes upon him over a gossiping dinner.

"And there was your neighbour over the way, who passes for a woman who has failed in her career because she is an old maid. People wag solemn heads of pity, and say that she made so great a mistake in not marrying the brilliant and famous man who was for long years her suitor. It is clear that no orange flower will ever bloom for her. The young people make their tender romances about her as they watch her, and think of her solitary hours of bitter regret and wasting longing, never to be satisfied.

"When I first came to town I shared this sympathy, and pleased my imagination with fancying her hard struggle with the conviction that she had lost all that made life beautiful. I supposed that if I had looked at her through my spectacles, I should see that it was only her radiant temper which so illuminated her dress, that we did not see it to be heavy sables.

"But when, one day, I did raise my glasses, and glanced at her, I did not see the old maid whom we all pitied for a secret sorrow, but a woman whose nature was a tropic, in which the sun shone, and birds sang, and flowers bloomed for ever. There were no regrets, no doubts and half wishes, but a calm sweetness, a transparent peace. I saw her blush when that old lover passed by, or paused to speak to her, but it was only the sign of delicate feminine consciousness. She knew his love, and honoured it, although she could not understand it nor return it. I looked closely at her, and I saw that although all the world had exclaimed at her indifference to such

homage, and had declared it was astonishing she should lose so fine a match, she would only say simply and quietly:

"'If Shakespeare loved me and I did not love him, how could I marry him?'

"Could I be misanthropical when I saw such fidelity, and dignity, and simplicity?

"You may believe that I was especially curious to look at that old lover of hers, through my glasses. He was no longer young, you know, when I came, and his fame and fortune were secure. Certainly I have heard of few men more beloved, and of none more worthy to be loved. He had the easy manner of a man of the world, the sensitive grace of a poet, and the charitable judgment of a wide traveller. He was accounted the most successful and most unspoiled of men. Handsome, brilliant, wise, tender, graceful, accomplished, rich, and famous, I looked at him, without the spectacles, in surprise and admiration, and wondered how your neighbour over the way had been so entirely untouched by his homage. I watched their intercourse in society, I saw her gay smile, her cordial greeting; I marked his frank address, his lofty courtesy. Their manner told no tales. The eager world was baulked, and I pulled out my spectacles.

"I had seen her already, and now I saw him. He lived only in memory, and his memory was a spacious and stately palace. But he did not oftenest frequent the banqueting hall, where were endless hospitality and feasting; nor did he loiter much in the reception rooms, where a throng of new visitors was for ever swarming; nor did he feed his vanity by haunting the apartment in which were stored the trophies of his varied triumphs—nor dream much in the great gallery hung with pictures of his travels.

"From all these lofty halls of memory he constantly escaped to a remote and solitary chamber, into which no one had ever penetrated. But my fatal eyes, behind the glasses, followed and entered with him, and saw that the chamber was a chapel. It was dim, and silent, and sweet with perpetual incense that burned upon an altar before a picture for ever veiled. There, whenever I chanced to look, I saw him kneel and pray; and there, by day and by night, a funeral hymn was chanted.

"I do not believe you will be surprised that I have been content to remain a deputy book-keeper. My spectacles regulated my ambition, and I early learned that there were better gods than Plutus. The glasses have lost much of their fascination now, and I do not often use them. But sometimes the desire is irresistible. Whenever I am greatly interested, I am compelled to take them out and see what it is that I admire.

"And yet—and yet," said Titbottom, after a pause, "I am not sure that I thank my grandfather."

Prue had long since laid away her work, and had heard every word

of the story. I saw that the dear woman had yet one question to ask, and had been earnestly hoping to hear something that would spare her the necessity of asking. But Titbottom had resumed his usual tone, after the momentary excitement, and made no further allusion to himself. We all sat silently ; Titbottom's eyes fastened musingly upon the carpet, Prue looking wistfully at him, and I regarding both.

It was past midnight, and our guest arose to go. He shook hands quietly, made his grave Spanish bow to Prue, and, taking his hat, went towards the front door. Prue and I accompanied him. I saw in her eyes that she would ask her question. And as Titbottom opened the door, I heard the low words :

" And Preciosa ? "

Titbottom paused. He had just opened the door, and the moonlight streamed over him as he stood, turning back to us.

" I have seen her but once since. It was in church, and she was kneeling, with her eyes closed, so that she did not see me. But I rubbed the glasses well, and looked at her, and saw a white lily, whose stem was broken, but which was fresh, and luminous, and fragrant still."

" That was a miracle," interrupted Prue.

" Madam, it was a miracle," replied Titbottom, " and for that one sight I am devoutly grateful for my grandfather's gift. I saw that although a flower may have lost its hold upon earthly moisture, it may still bloom as sweetly, fed by the dews of heaven."

The door closed and he was gone. But as Prue put her arm in mine, and we went upstairs together, she whispered in my ear :

" How glad I am that you don't wear spectacles."

BAYARD TAYLOR

1825–1878

WHO WAS SHE?

COME, now, there may as well be an end of this! Every time I meet your eyes squarely I detect the question just slipping out of them. If you had spoken it, or even boldly looked it; if you had shown in your motions the least sign of a fussy or fidgety concern on my account; if this were not the evening of my birthday, and you the only friend who remembered it; if confession were not good for the soul, though harder than sin to some people, of whom I am one—well, if all reasons were not at this instant converged into a focus, and burning me rather violently, in that region where the seat of emotion is supposed to lie, I should keep my trouble to myself.

Yes, I have fifty times had it on my mind to tell you the whole story. But who can be certain that his best friend will not smile—or, what is worse, cherish a kind of charitable pity ever afterward—when the external forms of a very serious kind of passion seem trivial, fantastic, foolish? And the worst of all is that the heroic part which I imagined I was playing proves to have been almost the reverse. The only comfort which I can find in my humiliation is that I am capable of feeling it. There isn't a bit of a paradox in this, as you will see; but I only mention it now to prepare you for, maybe, a little morbid sensitiveness of my moral nerves.

The documents are all in this portfolio under my elbow. I had just read them again completely through when you were announced. You may examine them as you like afterward: for the present, fill your glass, take another Cabaña, and keep silent until my "ghastly tale" has reached its most lamentable conclusion.

The beginning of it was at Wampsocket Springs three years ago last summer. I suppose most unmarried men who have reached, or passed, the age of thirty—and I was then thirty-three—experience a milder return of their adolescent warmth, a kind of fainter second spring, since the first has not fulfilled its promise. Of course I wasn't clearly conscious of this at the time: who is? But I had had my youthful passion and my tragic disappointment as you know: I had looked far enough into what Thackeray used to call the cryptic

mysteries to save me from the Scylla of dissipation and yet preserved enough of natural nature to keep me out of the Pharisaic Charybdis. My devotion to my legal studies had already brought me a mild distinction; the paternal legacy was a good nest-egg for the incubation of wealth—in short, I was a fair, respectable "party," desirable to the humbler mammas, and not to be despised by the haughty exclusives.

The fashionable hotel at the Springs holds three hundred, and it was packed. I had meant to lounge there for a fortnight and then finish my holidays at Long Branch; but eighty, at least, out of the three hundred were young and moved lightly in muslin. With my years and experience I felt so safe that to walk, talk, or dance with them became simply a luxury such as I had never—at least so freely—possessed before. My name and standing, known to some families, were agreeably exaggerated to the others, and I enjoyed that supreme satisfaction which a man always feels when he discovers, or imagines, that he is popular in society. There is a kind of premonitory apology implied in my saying this, I am aware. You must remember that I am culprit and culprit's counsel at the same time.

You have never been at Wampsocket? Well, the hills sweep around in a crescent on the northern side, and four or five radiating glens descending from them unite just above the village. The central one, leading to a waterfall (called "Minne-hehe" by the irreverent young people because there is so little of it), is the fashionable drive and promenade; but the second ravine on the left, steep, crooked, and cumbered with boulders which have tumbled from somewhere and lodged in the most extraordinary groupings, became my favourite walk of a morning. There was a footpath in it, well trodden at first, but gradually fading out as it became more like a ladder than a path, and I soon discovered that no other city feet than mine were likely to scale a certain rough slope which seemed the end of the ravine. With the aid of the tough laurel-stems I climbed to the top, passed through a cleft as narrow as a doorway, and presently found myself in a little upper dell, as wild and sweet and strange as one of the pictures that haunts us on the brink of sleep.

There was a pond—no, rather a bowl—of water in the centre; hardly twenty yards across, yet the sky in it was so pure and far down that the circle of rocks and summer foliage enclosing it seemed like a little planetary ring floating off alone through space. I can't explain the charm of the spot, nor the selfishness which instantly suggested that I should keep the discovery to myself. Ten years earlier I should have looked around for some fair spirit to be my "minister," but now—

One forenoon—I think it was the third or fourth time I had visited the place—I was startled to find the dent of a heel in the

earth, halfway up the slope. There had been rain during the night and the earth was still moist and soft. It was the mark of a woman's boot, only to be distinguished from that of a walking-stick by its semicircular form. A little higher, I found the outline of a foot, not so small as to awake an ecstasy, but with a suggestion of lightness, elasticity, and grace. If hands were thrust through holes in a board-fence, and nothing of the attached bodies seen, I can easily imagine that some would attract and others repel us: with footprints the impression is weaker, of course, but we cannot escape it. I am not sure whether I wanted to find the unknown wearer of the boot within my precious personal solitude: I was afraid I should see her while passing through the rocky crevice, and yet was disappointed when I found no one.

But on the flat, warm rock overhanging the tarn—my special throne—lay some withering wild flowers and a book! I looked up and down, right and left: there was not the slightest sign of another human life than mine. Then I lay down for a quarter of an hour, and listened: there were only the noises of bird and squirrel, as before. At last, I took up the book, the flat breadth of which suggested only sketches. There were, indeed, some tolerable studies of rocks and trees on the first pages; a few not very striking caricatures, which seemed to have been commenced as portraits, but recalled no faces I knew; then a number of fragmentary notes, written in pencil. I found no name, from first to last; only, under the sketches, a monogram so complicated and laborious that the initials could hardly be discovered unless one already knew them.

The writing was a woman's, but it had surely taken its character from certain features of her own: it was clear, firm, individual. It had nothing of that air of general debility which usually marks the manuscript of young ladies, yet its firmness was far removed from the stiff, conventional slope which all Englishwomen seem to acquire in youth and retain through life. I don't see how any man in my situation could have helped reading a few lines—if only for the sake of restoring lost property. But I was drawn on, and on, and finished by reading all: thence, since no further harm could be done, I reread, pondering over certain passages until they stayed with me. Here they are, as I set them down, that evening, on the back of a legal blank:

"It makes a great deal of difference whether we wear social forms as bracelets or handcuffs."

"Can we not still be wholly our independent selves, even while doing, in the main, as others do? I know two who are so; but they are married."

"The men who admire these bold, dashing young girls treat them like weaker copies of themselves. And yet they boast of what they call 'experience'!"

"I wonder if any one felt the exquisite beauty of the noon as I

did to-day? A faint appreciation of sunsets and storms is taught us in youth, and kept alive by novels and flirtations; but the broad, imperial splendour of this summer noon!—and myself standing alone in it—yes, utterly alone!"

"The men I seek *must* exist: where are they? How make an acquaintance, when one obsequiously bows himself away, as I advance? The fault is surely not all on my side."

There was much more, intimate enough to inspire me with a keen interest in the writer, yet not sufficiently so to make my perusal a painful indiscretion. I yielded to the impulse of the moment, took out my pencil, and wrote a dozen lines on one of the blank pages. They ran something in this wise:

"IGNOTUS IGNOTÆ!—You have bestowed without intending it, and I have taken without your knowledge. Do not regret the accident which has enriched another. This concealed idyl of the hills was mine, as I supposed, but I acknowledge your equal right to it. Shall we share the possession, or will you banish me?"

There was a frank advance, tempered by a proper caution, I fancied, in the words I wrote. It was evident that she was unmarried, but outside of that certainty there lay a vast range of possibilities, some of them alarming enough. However, if any nearer acquaintance should arise out of the incident, the next step must be taken by her. Was I one of the men she sought? I almost imagined so—certainly hoped so.

I laid the book on the rock, as I had found it, bestowed another keen scrutiny on the lonely landscape, and then descended the ravine. That evening, I went early to the ladies' parlour, chatted more than usual with the various damsels whom I knew, and watched with a new interest those whom I knew not. My mind, involuntarily, had already created a picture of the unknown. She might be twenty-five, I thought; a reflective habit of mind would hardly be developed before that age. Tall and stately, of course; distinctly proud in her bearing, and somewhat reserved in her manners. Why she should have large dark eyes, with long dark lashes, I could not tell; but so I seemed to see her. Quite forgetting that I was (or had meant to be) *Ignotus*, I found myself staring rather significantly at one or the other of the young ladies, in whom I discovered some slight general resemblance to the imaginary character. My fancies, I must confess, played strange pranks with me. They had been kept in a coop so many years that now, when I suddenly turned them loose, their rickety attempts at flight quite bewildered me.

No! there was no use in expecting a sudden discovery. I went to the glen betimes, next morning: the book was gone and so were the faded flowers, but some of the latter were scattered over the top of another rock, a few yards from mine. Ha! this means that I am not to withdraw, I said to myself: she makes room for me!

But how to surprise her?—for by this time I was fully resolved to make her acquaintance, even though she might turn out to be forty, scraggy, and sandy-haired.

I knew no other way so likely as that of visiting the glen at all times of the day. I even went so far as to write a line of greeting, with a regret that our visits had not yet coincided, and laid it under a stone on the top of *her* rock. The note disappeared, but there was no answer in its place. Then I suddenly remembered her fondness for the noon hours, at which time she was "utterly alone." The hotel *table d'hôte* was at one o'clock: her family, doubtless, dined later, in their own rooms. Why, this gave me, at least, her place in society! The question of age, to be sure, remained unsettled; but all else was safe.

The next day I took a late and large breakfast, and sacrificed my dinner. Before noon the guests had all straggled back to the hotel from glen and grove and lane, so bright and hot was the sunshine. Indeed, I could hardly have supported the reverberation of heat from the sides of the ravine, but for a fixed belief that I should be successful. While crossing the narrow meadow upon which it opened, I caught a glimpse of something white among the thickets higher up. A moment later it had vanished, and I quickened my pace, feeling the beginning of an absurd nervous excitement in my limbs. At the next turn, there it was again! but only for another moment. I paused, exulting, and wiped my drenched forehead. "She cannot escape me!" I murmured between the deep draughts of cooler air I inhaled in the shadow of a rock.

A few hundred steps more brought me to the foot of the steep ascent, where I had counted on overtaking her. I was too late for that, but the dry, baked soil had surely been crumbled and dislodged, here and there, by a rapid foot. I followed, in reckless haste, snatching at the laurel branches right and left, and paying little heed to my footing. About one-third of the way up I slipped, fell, caught a bush which snapped at the root, slid, whirled over, and before I fairly knew what had happened, I was lying doubled up at the bottom of the slope.

I rose, made two steps forward, and then sat down with a groan of pain; my left ankle was badly sprained, in addition to various minor scratches and bruises. There was a revulsion of feeling, of course—instant, complete, and hideous. I fairly hated the Unknown. "Fool that I was!" I exclaimed, in the theatrical manner, dashing the palm of my hand softly against my brow: "lured to this by the fair traitress! But no!—not fair: she shows the artfulness of faded, desperate spinsterhood; she is all compact of enamel, 'liquid bloom of youth' and hair dye!"

There was a fierce comfort in this thought, but it couldn't help me out of the scrape. I dared not sit still, lest a sunstroke should be added, and there was no resource but to hop or crawl down the

rugged path, in the hope of finding a forked sapling from which I could extemporise a crutch. With endless pain and trouble I reached a thicket, and was feebly working on a branch with my penknife, when the sound of a heavy footstep surprised me.

A brown harvest-hand, in straw hat and shirt-sleeves, presently appeared. He grinned when he saw me, and the thick snub of his nose would have seemed like a sneer at any other time.

"Are you the gentleman that got hurt?" he asked. "Is it pretty tolerable bad?"

"Who said I was hurt?" I cried in astonishment.

"One of your town-women from the hotel—I reckon she was. I was binding oats, in the field over the ridge; but I haven't lost no time in comin' here."

While I was stupidly staring at this announcement, he whipped out a big clasp-knife, and in a few minutes fashioned me a practicable crutch. Then, taking me by the other arm, he set me in motion toward the village.

Grateful as I was for the man's help, he aggravated me by his ignorance. When I asked if he knew the lady, he answered: "It's more'n likely *you* know her better." But where did she come from? Down from the hill, he guessed, but it might ha' been up the road. How did she look? was she old or young? what was the colour of her eyes? of her hair? There, now, I was too much for him. When a woman kept one o' them speckled veils over her face, turned her head away, and held her parasol between, how were you to know her from Adam? I declare to you, I couldn't arrive at one positive particular. Even when he affirmed that she was tall, he added, the next instant: "Now I come to think on it, she stepped mighty quick; so I guess she must ha' been short."

By the time we reached the hotel, I was in a state of fever; opiates and lotions had their will of me for the rest of the day. I was glad to escape the worry of questions, and the conventional sympathy expressed in inflections of the voice which are meant to soothe, and only exasperate. The next morning, as I lay upon my sofa, restful, patient, and properly cheerful, the waiter entered with a bouquet of wild flowers.

"Who sent them?" I asked.

"I found them outside your door, sir. Maybe there's a card; yes, here's a bit o' paper."

I opened the twisted slip he handed me, and read: "From your dell—and mine." I took the flowers; among them were two or three rare and beautiful varieties which I had only found in that one spot. Fool, again! I noiselessly kissed, while pretending to smell them, had them placed on a stand within reach, and fell into a state of quiet and agreeable contemplation.

Tell me yourself whether any male human being is ever too old for sentiment, provided that it strikes him at the right time and

in the right way! What did that bunch of wild flowers betoken? Knowledge, first; then, sympathy; and finally, encouragement, at least. Of course she had seen my accident, from above; of course she had sent the harvest labourer to aid me home. It was quite natural she should imagine some special, romantic interest in the lonely dell, on my part, and the gift took additional value from her conjecture.

Four days afterwards, there was a hop in the large dining-room of the hotel. Early in the morning, a fresh bouquet had been left at my door. I was tired of my enforced idleness, eager to discover the fair unknown (she was again fair, to my fancy!), and I determined to go down, believing that a cane and a crimson velvet slipper on the left foot would provoke a glance of sympathy from certain eyes, and thus enable me to detect them.

The fact was, the sympathy was much too general and effusive. Everybody, it seemed, came to me with kindly greetings; seats were vacated at my approach, even fat Mrs. Huxter insisting on my taking her warm place, at the head of the room. But Bob Leroy—you know him—as gallant a gentleman as ever lived, put me down at the right point, and kept me there. He only meant to divert me, yet gave me the only place where I could quietly inspect all the younger ladies, as dance or supper brought them near.

One of the dances was an old-fashioned cotillon, and one of the figures, the "coquette," brought every one, in turn, before me. I received a pleasant word or two from those whom I knew, and a long, kind, silent glance from Miss May Danvers. Where had been my eyes? She was tall, stately, twenty-five, had large dark eyes, and long dark lashes! Again the changes of the dance brought her near me; I threw (or strove to throw) unutterable meanings into my eyes, and cast them upon hers. She seemed startled, looked suddenly away, looked back to me, and—blushed. I knew her for what is called "a nice girl"—that is, tolerably frank, gently feminine, and not dangerously intelligent. Was it possible that I had overlooked so much character and intellect?

As the cotillon closed, she was again in my neighbourhood, and her partner led her in my direction. I was rising painfully from my chair, when Bob Leroy pushed me down again, whisked another seat from somewhere, planted it at my side, and there she was!

She knew who was her neighbour, I plainly saw; but instead of turning toward me, she began to fan herself in a nervous way and to fidget with the buttons of her gloves. I grew impatient.

"Miss Danvers!" I said at last.

"Oh!" was all her answer, as she looked at me for a moment.

"Where are your thoughts?" I asked.

Then she turned, with wide, astonished eyes, colouring softly up to the roots of her hair. My heart gave a sudden leap.

"How can you tell, if I cannot?" she asked.

"May I guess?"

She made a slight inclination of the head, saying nothing. I was then quite sure.

"The second ravine to the left of the main drive?"

This time she actually started; her colour became deeper, and a leaf of the ivory fan snapped between her fingers.

"Let there be no more a secret!" I exclaimed. "Your flowers have brought me your messages; I knew I should find you——"

Full of certainty, I was speaking in a low, impassioned voice. She cut me short by rising from her seat; I felt that she was both angry and alarmed. Fisher, of Philadelphia, jostling right and left in his haste, made his way toward her. She fairly snatched his arm, clung to it with a warmth I had never seen expressed in a ballroom. and began to whisper in his ear. It was not five minutes before he came to me, alone, with a very stern face, bent down, and said:

"If you have discovered our secret, you will keep silent. You are certainly a gentleman."

I bowed, coldly and savagely. There was a draught from the open window; my ankle became suddenly weary and painful, and I went to bed. Can you believe that I didn't guess, immediately, what it all meant? In a vague way, I fancied that I had been premature in my attempt to drop our mutual incognito, and that Fisher, a rival lover, was jealous of me. This was rather flattering than otherwise; but when I limped down to the ladies' parlour, the next day no Miss Danvers was to be seen. I did not venture to ask for her; it might seem importunate, and a woman of so much hidden capacity was evidently not to be wooed in the ordinary way.

So another night passed by; and then, with the morning, came a letter which made me feel, at the same instant, like a fool and a hero. It had been dropped in the Wampsocket post office, was legibly addressed to me and delivered with some other letters which had arrived by the night mail. Here it is; listen!

"NOTO IGNOTA!—Haste is not a gift of the gods, and you have been impatient, with the usual result. I was almost prepared for this, and thus am not wholly disappointed. In a day or two more you will discover your mistake, which, so far as I can learn, has done no particular harm. If you wish to find *me*, there is only one way to seek me; should I tell you what it is, I should run the risk of losing you—that is, I should preclude the manifestation of a certain quality which I hope to find in the man who may—or, rather, must—be my friend. This sounds enigmatical, yet you have read enough of my nature, as written in those random notes in my sketch-book, to guess, at least, how much I require. Only this let me add: mere guessing is useless.

"Being unknown, I can write freely. If you find me, I shall be

justified; if not, I shall hardly need to blush, even to myself, over a futile experiment.

"It is possible for me to learn enough of your life, henceforth, to direct my relation toward you. This may be the end; if so, I shall know it soon. I shall also know whether you continue to seek me. Trusting in your honour as a man, I must ask you to trust in mine, as a woman."

I *did* discover my mistake, as the Unknown promised. There had been a secret betrothal between Fisher and Miss Danvers, and, singularly enough, the momentous question and answer had been given in the very ravine leading to my upper dell! The two meant to keep the matter to themselves; but therein, it seems, I thwarted them; there was a little opposition on the part of their respective families, but all was amicably settled before I left Wampsocket.

The letter made a very deep impression upon me. What was the one way to find her? What could it be but the triumph that follows ambitious toil—the manifestation of all my best qualities as a man? Be she old or young, plain or beautiful, I reflected, hers is surely a nature worth knowing, and its candid intelligence conceals no hazards for me. I have sought her rashly, blundered, betrayed that I set her lower, in my thoughts, than her actual self: let me now adopt the opposite course, seek her openly no longer, go back to my tasks, and, following my own aims vigorously and cheerfully, restore that respect which she seemed to be on the point of losing. For, consciously or not, she had communicated to me a doubt, implied in the very expression of her own strength and pride. She had meant to address me as an equal, yet, despite herself, took a stand a little above that which she accorded to me.

I came back to New York earlier than usual, worked steadily at my profession and with increasing success, and began to accept opportunities (which I had previously declined) of making myself personally known to the great, impressible, fickle, tyrannical public. One or two of my speeches in the hall of the Cooper Institute, on various occasions—as you may perhaps remember—gave me a good headway with the party, and were the chief cause of my nomination for the State office which I still hold. (There, on the table lies a resignation, written to-day, but not yet signed. We'll talk of it afterward.) Several months passed by, and no further letter reached me. I gave up much of my time to society, moved familiarly in more than one province of the kingdom here, and vastly extended my acquaintance, especially among the women; but not one of them betrayed the mysterious something or other—really I can't explain precisely what it was!—which I was looking for. In fact, the more I endeavoured quietly to study the sex, the more confused I became.

At last I was subjected to the usual onslaught from the strong-

minded. A small but formidable committee entered my office one morning and demanded a categorical declaration of my principles. What my views on the subject were I knew very well; they were clear and decided; and yet I hesitated to declare them! It wasn't a temptation of Saint Anthony—that is, turned the other way—and the belligerent attitude of the dames did not alarm me in the least; but *she*! What was *her* position? How could I best please her? It flashed upon my mind, while Mrs. —— was making her formal speech, that I had taken no step for months without a vague, secret reference to *her*. So I strove to be courteous, friendly, and agreeably non-committal; begged for further documents, and promised to reply by letter in a few days.

I was hardly surprised to find the well-known hand on the envelope of a letter shortly afterward. I held it for a minute in my palm, with an absurd hope that I might sympathetically feel its character before breaking the seal. Then I read it with a great sense of relief.

"I have never assumed to guide a man, except toward the full exercise of his powers. It is not opinion in action, but opinion in a state of idleness or indifference, which repels me. I am deeply glad that you have gained so much since you left the country. If, in shaping your course, you have thought of me, I will frankly say that *to that extent*, you have drawn nearer. Am I mistaken in conjecturing that you wish to know my relation to the movement concerning which you were recently interrogated? In this, as in other instances which may come, I must beg you to consider me only as a spectator. The more my own views may seem likely to sway your action, the less I shall be inclined to declare them. If you find this cold or unwomanly, remember that it is not easy!"

Yes! I felt that I had certainly drawn much nearer to her. And from this time on, her imaginary face and form became other than they were. She was twenty-eight—three years older; a very little above the middle height, but not tall; serene, rather than stately, in her movements; with a calm, almost grave face, relieved by the sweetness of the full, firm lips; and finally eyes of pure, limpid grey, such as we fancy belonged to the Venus of Milo. I found her thus much more attractive than with the dark eyes and lashes—but she did not make her appearance in the circles which I frequented.

Another year slipped away. As an official personage, my importance increased, but I was careful not to exaggerate it to myself. Many have wondered (perhaps you among the rest) at my success, seeing that I possess no remarkable abilities. If I have any secret, it is simply this—doing faithfully, with all my might, whatever I undertake. Nine-tenths of our politicians become inflated and

careless, after the first few years, and are easily forgotten when they once lose place.

I am a little surprised now that I had so much patience with the Unknown. I was too important, at least, to be played with; too mature to be subjected to a longer test; too earnest, as I had proved, to be doubted, or thrown aside without a further explanation.

Growing tired, at last, of silent waiting, I bethought me of advertising. A carefully written "Personal," in which *Ignotus* informed *Ignota* of the necessity of his communicating with her, appeared simultaneously in the *Tribune, Herald, World,* and *Times.* I renewed the advertisement as the time expired without an answer, and I think it was about the end of the third week before one came, through the post, as before.

Ah, yes! I had forgotten. See! my advertisement is pasted on the note, as a heading or motto for the manuscript lines. I don't know why the printed slip should give me a particular feeling of humiliation as I look at it, but such is the fact. What she wrote is all I need read to you:

"I could not, at first, be certain that this was meant for me. If I were to explain to you why I have not written for so long a time, I might give you one of the few clues which I insist on keeping in my own hands. In your public capacity, you have been (so far as a woman may judge) upright, independent, wholly manly: in your relations with other men I learn nothing of you that is not honourable: toward women you are kind, chivalrous, no doubt, overflowing with the *usual* social refinements, but—— Here, again, I run hard upon the absolute necessity of silence. The way to me, if you care to traverse it, is so simple, so very simple! Yet, after what I have written, I cannot even wave my hand in the direction of it, without certain self-contempt. When I feel free to tell you, we shall draw apart and remain unknown for ever.

"You desire to write? I do not prohibit it. I have heretofore made no arrangement for hearing from you, in turn, because I could not discover that any advantage would accrue from it. But it seems only fair, I confess, and you dare not think me capricious. So, three days hence, at six o'clock in the evening, a trusty messenger of mine will call at your door. If you have anything to give her for me, the act of giving it must be the sign of a compact on your part that you will allow her to leave immediately, unquestioned and unfollowed."

You look puzzled, I see: you don't catch the real drift of her words? Well, that's a melancholy encouragement. Neither did I, at the time: it was plain that I had disappointed her in some way, and my intercourse with or manner toward women had something to do with it. In vain I ran over as much of my later social life as I could recall. There had been no special attention, nothing to

mislead a susceptible heart ; on the other side, certainly no rudeness, no want of " chivalrous " (she used the word !) respect and attention. What, in the name of all the gods, was the matter ?

In spite of all my efforts to grow clearer, I was obliged to write my letter in a rather muddled state of mind. I had *so* much to say ! sixteen folio pages, I was sure, would only suffice for an introduction to the case ; yet, when the creamy vellum lay before me and the moist pen drew my fingers towards it, I sat stock dumb for half an hour. I wrote, finally, in a half-desperate mood, without regard to coherency or logic. Here's a rough draft of a part of the letter, and a single passage from it will be enough :

" I can conceive of no simpler way to you than the knowledge of your name and address. I have drawn airy images of you, but they do not become incarnate, and I am not sure that I should recognise you in the brief moment of passing. Your nature is not of those which are instantly legible. As an abstract power, it has wrought in my life and it continually moves my heart with desires which are unsatisfactory because so vague and ignorant. Let me offer you, personally, my gratitude, my earnest friendship : you would laugh if I were *now* to offer more."

Stay ! here is another fragment, more reckless in tone :

" I want to find the woman whom I can love—who can love me. But this is a masquerade where the features are hidden, the voice disguised, even the hands grotesquely gloved. Come ! I will venture more than I ever thought it was possible to me. You shall know my deepest nature as I myself seem to know it. Then, give me the commonest chance of learning yours, through an intercourse which shall leave both free, should we not feel the closing of the inevitable bond ! "

After I had written that, the pages filled rapidly. When the appointed hour arrived, a bulky epistle, in a strong linen envelope, sealed with five wax seals, was waiting on my table. Precisely at six there was an announcement : the door opened, and a little outside, in the shadow, I saw an old woman, in a threadbare dress of rusty black.

" Come in ! " I said.

" The letter ! " answered a husky voice. She stretched out a bony hand, without moving a step.

" It is for a lady—very important business," said I, taking up the letter ; " are you sure that there is no mistake ? "

She drew her hand under the shawl, turned without a word, and moved toward the hall door.

" Stop ! " I cried : " I beg a thousand pardons ! Take it—take it !

You are the right messenger ! "

She clutched it, and was instantly gone.

Several days passed, and I gradually became so nervous and uneasy that I was on the point of inserting another " Personal " in the daily papers, when the answer arrived. It was brief and mysterious ; you shall hear the whole of it :

" I thank you. Your letter is a sacred confidence which I pray you never to regret. Your nature is sound and good. You ask no more than is reasonable, and I have no real right to refuse. In the one respect which I have hinted, I may have been unskilful or too narrowly cautious : I must have the certainty of this. Therefore, as a generous favour, give me six months more ! At the end of that time I will write to you again. Have patience with these brief lines : another word might be a word too much."

You notice the change in her tone ? The letter gave me the strongest impression of a new, warm, almost anxious interest on her part. My fancies, as first at Wampsocket, began to play all sorts of singular pranks : sometimes she was rich and of an old family, sometimes moderately poor and obscure, but always the same calm reposeful face and clear grey eyes. I ceased looking for her in society, quite sure that I should not find her, and nursed a wild expectation of suddenly meeting her, face to face, in the most unlikely places and under startling circumstances. However, the end of it all was patience—patience for six months.

There's not much more to tell ; but this last letter is hard for me to read. It came punctually, to a day. I knew it would, and at the last I began to dread the time, as if a heavy note were falling due, and I had no funds to meet it. My head was in a whirl when I broke the seal. The fact in it stared at me blankly, at once, but it was a long time before the words and sentences became intelligible.

" The stipulated time has come, and our hidden romance is at an end. Had I taken this resolution a year ago, it would have saved me many vain hopes, and you, perhaps, a little uncertainty. Forgive me, first, if you can, and then hear the explanation :

" You wished for a personal interview : *you have had, not one, but many.* We have met, in society, talked face to face, discussed the weather, the opera, toilettes, Queechy, Aurora Floyd, Long Branch and Newport, and exchanged a weary amount of fashionable gossip ; and you never guessed that I was governed by any deeper interest ! I have purposely uttered ridiculous platitudes, and you were as smilingly courteous as if you enjoyed them : I have let fall remarks whose hollowness and selfishness could not have escaped you, and have waited in vain for a word of sharp, honest, manly reproof. Your manner to me was unexceptionable, as it was to all other

women : but there lies the source of my disappointment, of—yes—of my sorrow !

" You appreciate, I cannot doubt, the qualities in woman which men value in one another—culture, independence of thought, a high and earnest apprehension of life ; but you know not how to seek them. It is not true that a mature and unperverted woman is flattered by receiving only the general obsequiousness which most men give to the whole sex. In the man who contradicts and strives with her, she discovers a truer interest, a nobler respect. The empty-headed, spindle-shanked youths who dance admirably, understand something of billiards, much less of horses, and still less of navigation, soon grow inexpressibly wearisome to us ; but the men who adopt their social courtesy, never seeking to arouse, uplift, instruct us, are a bitter disappointment.

" What would have been the end, had you really found me ? Certainly a sincere, satisfying friendship. No mysterious magnetic force has drawn you to me or held you near me, nor has my experiment inspired me with an interest which cannot be given up without a personal pang. I am grieved, for the sake of all men and all women. Yet, understand me ! I mean no slightest reproach. I esteem and honour you for what you are. Farewell ! "

There ! Nothing could be kinder in tone, nothing more humiliating in substance. I was sore and offended for a few days ; but I soon began to see, and ever more and more clearly, that she was wholly right. I was sure, also, that any further attempt to correspond with her would be in vain. It all comes of taking society just as we find it, and supposing that conventional courtesy is the only safe ground on which men and women can meet.

The fact is—there's no use in hiding it from myself (and I see, by your face, that the letter cuts into your own conscience)—she is a free, courageous, independent character, and—I am not.

But who *was* she ?

JOHN W. DE FOREST
1826–1906

AN INSPIRED LOBBYIST

A CERTAIN fallen angel (politeness toward his numerous and influential friends forbids me to mention his name abruptly) lately entered into the body of Mr. Ananias Pullwool, of Washington D.C.

As the said body was a capacious one, having been greatly enlarged circumferentially since it acquired its full longitude, there was accommodation in it for both the soul of Pullwool himself (it was a very little one) and for his distinguished visitant. Indeed, there was so much room in it that they never crowded each other, and that Pullwool hardly knew, if he even so much as mistrusted, that there was a chap in with him. But other people must have been aware of this double tenantry, or at least must have been shrewdly suspicious of it, for it soon became quite common to hear fellows say, "Pullwool has got the Devil in him."

There was, indeed, a remarkable change—a change not so much moral as physical and mental—in this gentleman's ways of deporting and behaving himself. From being loggy in movement and slow if not absolutely dull in mind, he became wonderfully agile and energetic. He had been a lobbyist, and he remained a lobbyist still, but such a different one, so much more vigorous, eager, clever, and impudent, that his best friends (if he could be said to have any friends) scarcely knew him for the same Pullwool. His fat fingers were in the buttonholes of Congressmen from the time when they put those buttonholes on in the morning to the time when they took them off at night. He seemed to be at one and the same moment treating some honourable member in the bar-room of the Arlington and running another honourable member to cover in the committee-rooms of the Capitol. He log-rolled bills which nobody else believed could be log-rolled, and he pocketed fees which absolutely and point-blank refused to go into other people's pockets. During this short period of his life he was the most successful and famous lobbyist in Washington, and the most sought after by the most rascally and desperate claimants of unlawful millions.

But, like many another man who has the Devil in him, Mr. Pullwool ran his luck until he ran himself into trouble. An investigating committee pounced upon him; he was put in confinement for

refusing to answer questions; his filchings were held up to the execration of the envious by both virtuous members and a virtuous press; and when he at last got out of durance he found it good to quit the District of Columbia for a season. Thus it happened that Mr. Pullwool and his eminent lodger took the cars and went to and fro upon the earth seeking what they might devour.

In the course of their travels they arrived in a little State, which may have been Rhode Island, or may have been Connecticut, or may have been one of the Pleiades, but which at all events had two capitals. Without regard to Morse's *Gazetteer*, or to whatever other Gazetteer may now be in currency, we shall affirm that one of these capitals was called Slowburg and the other Fastburg. For some hundreds of years (let us say five hundred, in order to be sure and get it high enough) Slowburg and Fastburg had shared between them, turn and turn about, year on and year off, all the gubernatorial and legislative pomps and emoluments that the said State had to bestow. On the 1st of April of every odd year the governor, preceded by citizen soldiers, straddling or curvetting through the mud—the governor, followed by twenty barouches full of eminent citizens, who were not known to be eminent at any other time, but who made a rush for a ride on this occasion as certain old ladies do at funerals—the governor, taking off his hat to pavements full of citizens of all ages, sizes, and colours, who did not pretend to be eminent—the governor, catching a fresh cold at every corner, and wishing the whole thing were passing at the equator—the governor triumphantly entered Slowburg—observe, Slowburg—read his always enormously long message there, and convened the legislature there. On the 1st of April of every even year the same governor, or a better one who had succeeded him, went through the same ceremonies in Fastburg. Each of these capitals boasted, or rather blushed over, a shabby old barn of a State-House, and each of them maintained a company of foot-guards and ditto of horse-guards, the latter very loose in their saddles. In each the hotels and boarding-houses had a full year and a lean year, according as the legislature sat in the one or in the other. In each there was a loud call for fresh shad and stewed oysters, or a comparatively feeble call for fresh shad and stewed oysters, under the same biennial conditions.

Such was the oscillation of grandeur and power between the two cities. It was an old-time arrangement, and like many other old-fashioned things, as, for instance, wood fires in open fireplaces, it had not only its substantial merits but its superficial inconveniences. Every year certain ancient officials were obliged to pack up hundreds of public documents and expedite them from Fastburg to Slowburg, or from Slowburg back to Fastburg. Every year there was an expense of a few dollars on this account, which the State treasurer figured up with agonies of terror, and which the opposition roared at as if the administration could have helped it. The State-Houses were

two mere deformities of patched plaster and leprous whitewash; they were such shapeless, graceless, dilapidated wigwams, that no sensitive patriot could look at them without wanting to fly to the uttermost parts of the earth; and yet it was not possible to build new ones, and hardly possible to obtain appropriations enough to shingle out the weather; for Fastburg would vote no money to adorn Slowburg, and Slowburg was equally niggardly toward Fastburg. The same jealousy produced the same frugality in the management of other public institutions, so that the patients of the lunatic asylum were not much better lodged and fed than the average sane citizen, and the gallows-birds in the State's prison were brought down to a temperance which caused admirers of that species of fowl to tremble with indignation. In short, the two capitals were as much at odds as the two poles of a magnet, and the results of this repulsion were not all of them worthy of hysterical admiration.

But advantages seesawed with disadvantages. In this double-ender of a State political jobbery was at fault, because it had no headquarters. It could not get together a ring; it could not raise a corps of lobbyists. Such few axe-grinders as there were had to dodge back and forth between the Fastburg grindstone and the Slowburg grindstone, without ever fairly getting their tools sharpened. Legislature here and legislature there; it was like guessing at a pea between two thimbles; you could hardly ever put your finger on the right one. Then what one capital favoured the other disfavoured, and between them appropriations were kicked and hustled under the table, the grandest of railroad schemes shrunk into waste-paper baskets; in short, the public treasury was next door to the unapproachable. Such, indeed, was the desperate condition of lobbyists in this State, that, had it contained a single philanthropist of the advanced radical stripe, he would surely have brought in a bill for their relief and encouragement.

Into the midst of this happily divided community dropped Mr. Ananias Pullwool with the Devil in him. It remains to be seen whether this pair could figure up anything worth pocketing out of the problem of two capitals.

It was one of the even years, and the legislature met in Fastburg, and the little city was brimful. Mr Pullwool with difficulty found a place for himself without causing the population to slop over. Of course he went to an hotel, for he needed to make as many acquaintances as possible, and he knew that a bar was a perfect hot-house for ripening such friendships as he cared for. He took the best room he could get; and as soon as chance favoured he took a better one, with parlour attached; and on the sideboard in the parlour he always had cigars and decanters. The result was that in a week or so he was on jovial terms with several senators, numerous members of the lower house, and all the members of the "third house." But lobbying did not work in Fastburg as Mr. Pullwool

had found it to work in other capitals. He exhibited the most dazzling double-edged axes, but nobody would grind them; he pointed out the most attractive and convenient of logs for rolling, but nobody would put a lever to them.

"What the doose does this mean?" he at last inquired of Mr. Josiah Dicker, a member who had smoked dozens of his cigars and drunk quarts out of his decanters. "I don't understand this little old legislature at all, Mr. Dicker. Nobody wants to make any money; at least, nobody has the spirit to try to make any. And yet the State is full; never been bled a drop; full as a tick. What does it mean?"

Mr. Dicker looked disconsolate. Perhaps it may be worth a moment's time to explain that he could not well look otherwise. Broken in fortune and broken in health, he was a failure and knew it. His large forehead showed power, and he was, in fact, a lawyer of some ability; and still he could not support his family, could not keep a mould of mortgages from creeping all over his house-lot, and had so many creditors that he could not walk the streets comfortably. The trouble lay in hard drinking, with its resultant waste of time, infidelity to trust, and impatience of application. Thin, haggard, duskily pallid, deeply wrinkled at forty, his black eyes watery and set in baggy circles of a dull brown, his lean dark hands shaky and dirty, his linen wrinkled and buttonless, his clothing frayed and unbrushed, he was an impersonation of failure. He had gone into the legislature with a desperate hope of somehow finding money in it, and as yet he had discovered nothing more than his beggarly three dollars a day, and he felt himself more than ever a failure. No wonder that he wore an air of profound depression, approaching to absolute wretchedness and threatening suicide.

He looked the more cast down by contrast with the successful Mr. Pullwool, gaudily alight with satin and jewellery, and shining with conceit. Pullwool, by the way, although a dandy (that is, such a dandy as one sees in gambling-saloons and behind liquor-bars), was far from being a thing of beauty. He was so obnoxiously gross and shapeless, that it seemed as if he did it on purpose and to be irritating. His fat head was big enough to make a dwarf of, hunchback and all. His mottled cheeks were vast and pendulous to that degree that they inspired the imaginative beholder with terror, as reminding him of avalanches and landslides which might slip their hold at the slightest shock and plunge downward in a path of destruction. One puffy eyelid drooped in a sinister way; obviously that was the eye that the Devil had selected for his own; he kept it well curtained for purposes of concealment. Looking out of this peep-hole, the Satanic badger could see a short, thick nose, and by leaning forward a little he could get a glimpse of a broad chin of several stories. Another unpleasing feature was a full set of false teeth, which grinned in a ravenous fashion that was

truly disquieting, as if they were capable of devouring the whole internal revenue. Finally, this continent of physiognomy was diversified by a gigantic hairy wart, which sprouted defiantly from the temple nearest the game eye, as though Lucifer had accidentally poked one of his horns through. Mr. Dicker, who was a sensitive, squeamish man (as drunkards sometimes are, through bad digestion and shaky nerves), could hardly endure the sight of this wart, and always wanted to ask Pullwool why he didn't cut it off.

"What's the meaning of it all?" persisted the Washington wire-puller, surveying the Fastburg wire-puller with bland superiority, much as the city mouse may have surveyed the country mouse.

"Two capitals," responded Dicker, withdrawing his nervous glance from the wart, and locking his hands over one knee to quiet their trembling.

Mr. Pullwool, having the Old Harry in him, and being consequently full of all malice and subtlety, perceived at once the full scope and force of the explanation.

"I see," he said, dropping gently back into his arm-chair, with the plethoric, soft movement of a subsiding pillow. The puckers of his cumbrous eyelids drew a little closer together; his bilious eyes peered out cautiously between them like sallow assassins watching through curtained windows; for a minute or so he kept up what might without hyperbole be called a devil of a thinking.

"I've got it," he broke out at last. "Dicker, I want you to bring in a bill to make Fastburg the only capital."

"What is the use?" asked the legislator, looking more disconsolate, more hopless than ever. "Slowburg will oppose it and beat it."

"Never you mind," persisted Mr. Pullwool. "You bring in your little bill and stand up for it like a man. There's money in it. You don't see it? Well, I do; I'm used to seeing money in things, and in this case I see it plain. As sure as whisky is whisky, there's money in it."

Mr. Pullwool's usually dull and, so to speak, extinct countenance was fairly alight and aflame with exultation. It was almost a wonder that his tallowy person did not gutter beneath the blaze, like an over-fat candle under the flaring of a wick too large for it.

"Well, I'll bring in the bill," agreed Mr. Dicker, catching the enthusiasn of his counsellor and shaking off his lethargy. He perceived a dim promise of fees, and at the sight his load of despondency dropped away from him, as Christian's burden loosened in presence of the Cross. He looked a little like the confident, resolute Tom Dicker who twenty years before had graduated from college the brightest, bravest, most eloquent fellow in his class, and the one who seemed to have before him the finest future.

"Snacks!" said Mr. Pullwool.

At this brazen word Mr. Dicker's countenance fell again ; he was ashamed to talk so frankly about plundering his fellow-citizens : " a little grain of conscience turned him sour."

" I will take pay for whatever I can do as a lawyer," he stammered.

" Get out ! " laughed the Satanic one. " You just take all there is a-going ! You need it bad enough. I know when a man's hard up. I know the signs. I've been as bad off as you ; had to look all ways for five dollars ; had to play second fiddle and say thanky. But what I offer you ain't a second fiddle. It's as good a chance as my own. Even divides. One half to you and one half to me. You know the people and I know the ropes. It's a fair bargain. What do you say ? "

Mr. Dicker thought of his decayed practice and his unpaid bills, and flipping overboard his little grain of conscience, he said, " Snacks."

" All right," grinned Pullwool, his teeth gleaming alarmingly. " Word of a gentleman," he added, extending his pulpy hand, loaded with ostentatious rings, and grasping Dicker's recoiling fingers. " Harness up your little bill as quick as you can, and drive it like Jehu. Fastburg to be the only capital. Slowburg no claims at all, historical, geographical, or economic. The old arrangement a humbug ; as inconvenient as a fifth wheel of a coach ; cost the State thousands of greenbacks every year. Figure it all up statistically and dab it over with your shiniest rhetoric and make a big thing of it every way. That's what you've got to do ; that's your little biz. I'll tend to the rest."

" I don't quite see where the money is to come from," observed Mr. Dicker.

" Leave that to me," said the veteran of the lobbies ; " my name is Pullwool, and I know how to pull the wool over men's eyes, and then I know how to get at their breeches-pockets. You bring in your bill and make your speech. Will you do it ? "

" Yes," answered Dicker, bolting all scruples in another half tumbler of brandy.

He kept his word. As promptly as parliamentary forms and mysteries would allow, there was a bill under the astonished noses of honourable law-givers, removing the seat of legislation from Slowburg and centring it in Fastburg. This bill Mr. Thomas Dicker supported with that fluency and fiery enthusiasm of oratory which had for a time enabled him to show as the foremost man of his State. Great was the excitement, great the rejoicing and anger. The press of Fastburg sent forth shrieks of exultation, and the press of Slowburg responded with growlings of disgust. The two capitals and the two geographical sections which they represented were ready to fire Parrott guns at each other, without regard to life and property in the adjoining regions of the earth. If there was a citizen

of the little Commonwealth who did not hear of this bill and did not talk of it, it was because that citizen was as deaf as a post and as dumb as an oyster. Ordinary political distinctions were forgotten, and the old party-whips could not manage their very wheel-horses, who went snorting and kicking over the traces in all directions. In short, both in the legislature and out of it, nothing was thought of but the question of the removal of the capital.

Among the loudest of the agitators was Mr. Pullwool; not that he cared one straw whether the capital went to Fastburg, or to Slowburg, or to Ballyhack; but for the money which he thought he saw in the agitation he did care mightily, and to get that money he laboured with a zeal which was not of this world alone. At the table of his hotel, and in the bar-room of the same institution, and in the lobbies of the legislative hall, and in editorial sanctums and barber's shops, and all other nooks of gossip, he trumpeted the claims of Fastburg as if that little city were the New Jerusalem and deserved to be the metropolis of the sidereal universe. All sorts of trickeries, too: he sent spurious telegrams and got fictitious items into the newspapers; he lied through every medium known to the highest civilisation. Great surely was his success, for the row which he raised was tremendous. But a row alone was not enough; it was the mere breeze upon the surface of the waters; the treasure-ship below was still to be drawn up and gutted.

"It will cost money," he whispered confidentially to capitalists and land-owners. "We must have the sinews of war, or we can't carry it on. There's your city lots goin' to double in value if this bill goes through. What per cent. will you pay on the advance? That's the question. Put your hands in your pockets and pull 'em out full, and put back ten times as much. It's a sure investment; warranted to yield a hundred per cent.; the safest and biggest thing a-going."

Capitalists and land owners and merchants hearkened and believed and subscribed. The slyest old hunks in Fastburg put a faltering forefinger into his long pocket-book, touched a greenback which had been laid away there as neatly as a corpse in its coffin, and resurrected it for the use of Mr. Pullwool. By tens, by twenties, by fifties, and by hundreds the dollars of the ambitious citizens of the little metropolis were charmed into the portemonnaie of this rattlesnake of a lobbyist.

"I never saw a greener set," chuckled Pullwool. "By jiminy, I believe they'd shell out for a bill to make their town a seaport, if it was a hundred miles from a drop of water."

But he was not content with individual subscriptions, and conscientiously scorned himself until he had got at the city treasury.

"The corporation must pony up," he insisted, with the mayor. "This bill is just shaking in the wind for lack of money. Fastburg must come down with the dust. You ought to see to it. What are

you chief magistrate for? Ain't it to tend to the welfare of the city? Look here, now; you call the common council together—secret session, you understand. You call 'em together and let me talk to 'em. I want to make the loons comprehend that it's their duty to vote something handsome for this measure."

The mayor hummed and hawed one way, and then he hawed and hummed the other way, and the result was that he granted the request. There was a secret session in the council-room, with his honour at the top of the long green table, with a row of more or less respectable functionaries on either side of it, and with Mr. Pullwool and the Devil at the bottom. Of course it is not to be supposed that this last-named personage was visible to the others, or that they had more than a vague suspicion of his presence. Had he fully revealed himself, had he plainly exhibited his horns and hoofs, or even so much as uncorked his perfume-bottle of brimstone, it is more than probable that the city authorities would have been exceedingly scandalised, and they might have adjourned the session. As it was, seeing nothing more disagreeable than the obese form of the lobbyist, they listened calmly while he unfolded his project.

Mr. Pullwool spoke at length, and to Fastburg ears eloquently. Fastburg must be the sole capital; it had every claim, historical, geographical, and commercial, to that distinction; it ought, could, would, and should be the sole capital; that was about the substance of his exordium.

"But, gentlemen, it will cost," he went on. "There is an unscrupulous and furious opposition to the measure. The other side—those fellows from Slowburg and vicinity—are putting their hands into their breeches-pockets. You must put your hands into yours. The thing will be worth millions to Fastburg. But it will cost thousands. Are you ready to fork over? *Are* you ready?"

"What's the figure?" asked one of the councilmen. "What do you estimate?"

"Gentlemen, I shall astonish *some* of you," answered Mr. Pullwool cunningly. It was well put; it was as much as to say, "I shall astonish the green ones; of course the really strong heads among you won't be in the least bothered." "I estimate," he continued, "that the city treasury will have to put up a good round sum, say a hundred thousand dollars, be it more or less."

A murmur of surprise, of chagrin, and of something like indignation ran along the line of official mustaches. "Nonsense," "The dickens," "Can't be done," "We can't think of it," broke out several councilmen, in a distinctly unparliamentary manner.

"Gentlemen, one moment," pleaded Pullwool, passing his greasy smile around the company, as though it were some kind of refreshment. "Look at the whole job; it's a big job. We must have lawyers; we must have newspapers in all parts of the State; we must have writers to work up the historical claims of the city; we

must have fellows to buttonhole honourable members; we must have fees for honourable members themselves. How can you do it for less?"

Then he showed a schedule; so much to this wire-puller and that and the other; so much apiece to so many able editors; so much for eminent legal counsel; finally, a trifle for himself. And one hundred thousand dollars or thereabouts was what the schedule footed up, turn it whichever way you would.

Of course this common council of Fastburg did not dare to vote such a sum for such a purpose. Mr. Pullwool had not expected that it would; all that he had hoped for was the half of it; but that half he got.

"Did they do it?" breathlessly inquired Tom Dicker of him, when he returned to the hotel.

"They done it," calmly, yet triumphantly, responded Mr. Pullwool.

"Thunder!" exclaimed the amazed Dicker. "You are the most extraordinary man! You must have the very Devil in you!"

Instead of being startled by this alarming supposition, Mr. Pullwool looked gratified. People thus possessed generally do look gratified when the possession is alluded to.

But the inspired lobbyist did not pass his time in wearing an aspect of satisfaction. When there was money to get and to spend he could run his fat off almost as fast as if he were pouring it into candle-moulds. The ring—the famous capital ring of Fastburg—must be seen to, its fingers greased, and its energy quickened. Before he rolled his apple-dumpling of a figure into bed that night he had interviewed Smith and Brown the editors, Jones and Robinson the lawyers, Smooth and Slow the literary characters, various lobbyists, and various law-givers.

"Work, gentlemen, and capitalise Fastburg and get your dividends," was his inspiring message to one and all. He promised Smith and Brown ten dollars for every editorial, and five dollars for every humbugging telegram, and two dollars for every telling item; Jones and Robinson were to have five hundred dollars apiece for concurrent legal statements of the claim of the city; Smooth and Slow, as being merely authors and so not accustomed to obtain much for their labour, got a hundred dollars between them for working up the case historically. To the lobbyists and members Pullwool was munificent; it seemed as if those gentlemen could not be paid enough for their "influence"; as if they alone had that kind of time which is money. Only, while dealing liberally with them, the inspired one did not forget himself. A thousand for Mr. Sly; yes, Mr. Sly was to receipt for a thousand; but he must let half of it stick to the Pullwool fingers. The same arrangement was made with Mr. Green and Mr. Sharp and Mr. Bummer and Mr. Pickpurse and Mr. Buncombe. It was a game of snacks, half to you and half to me;

and sometimes it was more than snacks—a thousand for you two and a thousand for me too.

With such a greasing of the wheels, you may imagine that the machinery of the ring worked to a charm. In the city and in the legislature and throughout the State there was the liveliest buzzing and humming and clicking of political wheels and cranks and cogs that had ever been known in those hitherto pastoral localities. The case of Fastburg against Slowburg was put in a hundred ways, and proved as sure as it was put. It really seemed to the eager burghers as if they already heard the clink of hammers on a new State-House and beheld a perpetual legislature sitting on their fences and curb-stones until the edifice should be finished. The great wire-puller and his gang of stipendiaries were the objects of popular gratitude and adoration. The landlord of the hotel which Mr. Pullwool patronised actually would not take pay for that gentleman's board.

"No, sir!" declared this simple Boniface, turning crimson with enthusiasm. "You are going to put thousands of dollars into my purse, and I'll take nothing out of yours. And any little thing in the way of cigars and whisky that you want, sir, why, call for it. It's my treat, sir."

"Thank you, sir," kindly smiled the great man. "That's what I call the square thing. Mr. Boniface, you are a gentleman and a scholar, and I'll mention your admirable house to my friends. By the way, I shall have to leave you for a few days."

"Going to leave us!" exclaimed Mr. Boniface, aghast. "I hope not till this job is put through."

"I must run about a bit," muttered Pullwool confidentially. "A little turn through the State, you understand, to stir up the country districts. Some of the members ain't as hot as they should be, and I want to set their constituents after them. Nothing like getting on a few deputations."

"Oh, exactly!" chuckled Mr. Boniface, ramming his hands into his pockets and cheerfully jingling a bunch of keys and a penknife for lack of silver. It was strange indeed that he should actually see the Devil in Mr. Pullwool's eye and should not have a suspicion that he was in danger of being humbugged by him. "And your rooms?" he suggested. "How about them?"

"I keep them," replied the lobbyist grandly, as if blaspheming the expense—to Boniface. "Our friends must have a little hole to meet in. And while you are about it, Mr. Boniface, see that they get something to drink and smoke, and we'll settle it between us."

"Pre—cisely!" laughed the landlord, as much as to say, "My treat!" And so Mr. Pullwool, that Pericles and Lorenzo de'Medici rolled in one, departed for a season from the city which he ruled and blessed. Did he run about the State and preach and crusade in behalf of Fastburg, and stir up the bucolic populations to stir up their representatives in its favour? Not a bit of it; the place that he

went to, and the only place that he went to, was Slowburg; yes, covering up his tracks in his usual careful style, he made direct for the rival of Fastburg. What did he propose to do there? Oh, how can we reveal the whole duplicity and turpitude of Ananias Pullwool? The subject is too vast for a merely human pen; it requires the literary ability of a recording angel. Well, we must get our feeble lever under this boulder of wickedness as we can, and do our faint best to expose all the reptiles and slimy things beneath it. The first person whom this apostle of lobbyism called upon in Slowburg was the mayor of that tottering capital.

"My name is Pullwool," he said to the official, and he said it with an almost enviable ease of impudence, for he was used to introducing himself to people who despised and detested him. "I want to see you confidentially about this capital ring which is making so much trouble."

"I thought you were in it," replied the mayor, turning very red in the face, for he had heard of Mr. Pullwool as the leader of said ring; and being an iracund man, he was ready to knock his head off.

"In it!" exclaimed the possessed one. "I wish I was. It's a fat thing. More than fifty thousand dollars paid out already!"

"Good gracious!" exclaimed the mayor in despair.

"By the way, this is between ourselves," added Pullwool. "You take it so, I hope. Word of honour, eh?"

"Why, if you have anything to communicate that will help us, why, of course, I promise secrecy," stammered the mayor. "Yes, certainly; word of honour."

"Well, I've been looking about among those fellows a little," continued Ananias. "I've kept my eyes and ears open. It's a way I have. And I've learned a thing or two that it will be to your advantage to know. Yes, sir! fifty thousand dollars!—the city has voted it and paid it, and the ring has got it. That's why they are all working so. And depend upon it, they'll carry the legislature and turn Slowburg out to grass unless you wake up and do something."

"By heavens!" exclaimed the iracund mayor, turning red again. "It's a piece of confounded rascality. It ought to be exposed."

"No, don't expose it," put in Mr. Pullwool, somewhat alarmed. "That game never works. Of course they'd deny it and swear you down, for bribing witnesses is as easy as bribing members. I'll tell you what to do. Beat them at their own weapons. Raise a purse that will swamp theirs. That's the way the world goes. It's an auction. The highest bidder gets the article."

Well, the result of it all was that the city magnates of Slowburg did just what had been done by the city magnates of Fastburg, only, instead of voting fifty thousand dollars into the pockets of the ring, they voted sixty thousand. With a portion of this money about him, and with authority to draw for the rest on proper vouchers,

Mr. Pullwool, his tongue in his cheek, bade farewell to his new allies. As a further proof of the ready wit and solid impudence of this sublime politician and model of American statesman, let me here introduce a brief anecdote. Leaving Slowburg by the cars, he encountered a gentleman from Fastburg, who saluted him with tokens of amazement, and said, "What are you doing here, Mr. Pullwool?"

"Oh, just breaking up these fellows a little," whispered the man with the Devil in him. "They were making too strong a fight. I had to *see* some of them," putting one hand behind his back and rubbing his fingers together, to signify that there had been a taking of bribes. "But be shady about it. For the sake of the good cause, keep quiet. Mum's the word."

The reader can imagine how briskly the fight between the two capitals reopened when Mr. Pullwool re-entered the lobby. Slowburg now had its adherents, and they struggled like men who saw money in their warfare, and they struggled not in vain. To cut a very long story very short, to sum the whole of an exciting drama in one sentence, the legislature kicked overboard the bill to make Fastburg the sole seat of government. Nothing had come of the whole row, except that a pair of simple little cities had spent over one hundred thousand dollars, and that the capital ring, fighting on both sides and drawing pay from both sides, had lined its pockets, while the great creator of the ring had crammed his to bursting.

"What does this mean, Mr. Pullwool?" demanded the partially honest and entirely puzzled Tom Dicker, when he had discovered by an unofficial count of noses how things were going. "Fastburg has spent all its money for nothing. It won't be sole capital, after all."

"I never expected it would be," replied Pullwool, so tickled by the Devil that was in him that he could not help laughing. "I never wanted it to be. Why, it would spoil the little game. This is a trick that can be played every year."

"Oh!" exclaimed Mr. Dicker, and was dumb with astonishment for a minute.

"Didn't you see through it before?" grinned the grand master of all guile and subtlety.

"I did not," confessed Mr. Dicker, with a mixture of shame and abhorrence. "Well," he presently added, recovering himself, "shall we settle?"

"Oh, certainly, if you are ready," smiled Pullwool, with the air of a man who has something coming to him.

"And what, exactly, will be my share?" asked Dicker humbly.

"What do you mean?" stared Pullwool, apparently in the extremity of amazement.

"You said *snacks*, didn't you?" urged Dicker, trembling violently.

"Well, *snacks* it is, replied Pullwool. "Haven't you had a thousand?"

"Yes," admitted Dicker.

"Then you owe me five hundred?" Mr. Dicker did not faint, though he came very near it, but he staggered out of the room as white as a sheet, for he was utterly crushed by this diabolical impudence.

That very day Mr. Pullwool left for Washington, and the Devil for *his* place, each of them sure to find the other when he wanted him, if indeed their roads lay apart.

JOHN TOWNSEND TROWBRIDGE
1827–1916

THE MAN WHO STOLE A MEETING-HOUSE

On a recent journey to the Pennsylvania oil regions, I stopped one evening with a fellow-traveller at a village which had just been thrown into a turmoil of excitement by the exploits of a horse-thief. As we sat around the tavern hearth, after supper, we heard the particulars of the rogue's capture and escape fully discussed; then followed many another tale of theft and robbery, told amid curling puffs of tobacco-smoke; until, at the close of an exciting story, one of the natives turned to my travelling acquaintance, and, with a broad laugh, said, "Kin you beat that, stranger?"

"Well, I don't know—maybe I could if I should try. I never happened to fall in with any such tall horse-stealing as you tell of, but I knew a man who stole a meeting-house once."

"Stole a meetin'-house! That goes a little beyant anything yit," remarked another of the honest villagers. "Ye don't mean he stole it and carried it away?"

"Stole it and carried it away," repeated my travelling companion seriously, crossing his legs, and resting his arm on the back of his chair. "And, more than all that, I helped him."

"How happened that?—for you don't look much like a thief yourself."

All eyes were now turned upon my friend, a plain New England farmer, whose honest homespun appearance and candid speech commanded respect.

"I was his hired man, and I acted under orders. His name was Jedwort—Old Jedwort the boys called him, although he wasn't above fifty when the crooked little circumstance happened, which I'll make as straight a story of as I can, if the company would like to hear it."

"Sartin, stranger! sartin! about stealin' the meetin'-house," chimed in two or three voices.

My friend cleared his throat, put his hair behind his ears, and with a grave, smooth face, but with a merry twinkle in his shrewd grey eye, began as follows:—

" Jedwort, I said his name was ; and I shall never forget how he looked one particular morning. He stood leaning on the front gate —or rather on the post, for the gate itself was such a shackling concern a child couldn't have leaned on't without breaking it down. And Jedwort was no child. Think of a stoutish, stooping, duck-legged man, with a mountainous back, strongly suggestive of a bag of grist under his shirt—and you have him. That imaginary grist had been growing heavier and heavier, and he more and more bent under it, for the last fifteen years and more, until his head and neck just came forward out from between his shoulders like a turtle's from its shell. His arms hung, as he walked, almost to the ground. Being curved with the elbows outward, he looked for all the world, in a front view, like a waddling interrogation-point enclosed in a parenthesis.

" If man was ever a quadruped, as I've heard some folks tell, and rose gradually from four legs to two, there must have been a time, very early in his history, when he went about like Old Jedwort.

" The gate had been a very good gate in its day. It had even been a genteel gate when Jedwort came into possession of the place by marrying his wife, who inherited it from her uncle. That was some twenty years before, and everything had been going to rack and ruin ever since.

" Jedwort himself had been going to rack and ruin, morally speaking. He was a middling decent sort of man when I first knew him ; and I judge there must have been something about him more than common, or he never could have got such a wife. But then women do marry sometimes unaccountably.

" I speak with feeling on this subject, for I had an opportunity of seeing what Mrs. Jedwort had to put up with from a man no woman of her stamp could do anything but detest. She was the patientest creature you ever saw. She was even too patient. If I had been tied to such a cub, I think I should have cultivated the beautiful and benignant qualities of a wild cat ; there would have been one good fight, and one of us would have been living, and the other would have been dead, and that would have been the end of it.

" But Mrs. Jedwort bore and bore untold miseries, and a large number of children. She had had nine of these, and three were under the sod and six above it when Jedwort ran off with the meeting-house in the way I am going on to tell you. There was Maria, the oldest girl, a perfect picture of what her mother had been at nineteen. Then there were the two boys, Dave and Dan, fine young fellows, spite of their father. Then came Lottie and Susie, and then Willie, a little four-year-old.

" It was amazing to see what the mother would do to keep her family looking decent with the little means she had. For Jedwort was the tightest screw ever you saw. It was avarice that had spoiled him, and came so near turning him into a beast. The boys used to

say he grew so bent looking in the dirt for pennies. That was true of his mind, if not of his body. He was a poor man, and a pretty respectable man, when he married his wife; but he had no sooner come into possession of a little property than he grew crazy for more.

"There are a good many men in the world, that nobody looks upon as monomaniacs, who are crazy in just that sort of way. They are all for laying up money, depriving themselves of comforts, and their families of the advantages of society and education, just to add a few dollars to their hoard every year; and so they keep on till they die and leave it to their children, who would be much better off if a little more had been invested in the cultivation of their minds and manners, and less in stocks and bonds.

"Jedwort was just one of that class of men, although perhaps he carried the fault I speak of a little to excess. A dollar looked so big to him, and he held it so close, that at last he couldn't see much of anything else. By degrees he lost all regard for decency and his neighbour's opinions. His children went barefoot, even after they got to be great boys and girls, because he was too mean to buy them shoes. It was pitiful to see a nice, interesting girl like Maria go about looking as she did, while her father was piling his money into the bank. She wanted to go to school and learn music, and be somebody; but he wouldn't keep a hired girl, and so she was obliged to stay at home and do housework; and she could no more have got a dollar out of him to pay for clothes and tuition than you could squeeze sap out of a hoe-handle.

"The only way his wife could ever get anything new for the family was by stealing butter from her own dairy, and selling it behind his back. 'You needn't say anything to Mr. Jedwort about this batch of butter,' she would hint to the storekeeper; 'but you may hand the money to me, or I will take my pay in goods.' In this way a new gown, or a piece of cloth for the boy's coats, or something else the family needed, would be smuggled into the house, with fear and trembling lest old Jedwort should make a row and find where the money came from.

"The house inside was kept neat as a pin; but everything around it looked terribly shiftless. It was built originally in an ambitious style, and painted white. It had four tall front pillars, supporting the portion of the roof that came over the porch—lifting up the eyebrows of the house, if I may so express myself, and making it look as if it was going to sneeze. Half the blinds were off their hinges, and the rest flapped in the wind. The front-door step had rotted away. The porch had once a good floor, but for years Jedwort had been in the habit of going to it whenever he wanted a board for the pig-pen, until not a bit of floor was left.

"But I began to tell about Jedwort leaning on the gate that morning. We had all noticed him; and as Dave and I brought in the milk, his mother asked, 'What is your father planning now?

Half the time he stands there, looking up the road; or else he's walking up that way in a brown study.'

"'He's got his eye on the old meeting-house,' says Dave, setting down his pail. 'He has been watching it and walking round it, off and on, for a week.'

"That was the first intimation I had of what the old fellow was up to. But after breakfast he followed me out of the house, as if he had something on his mind to say to me.

"'Stark,' says he at last, 'you've always insisted on't that I wasn't an enterprisin' man.'

"'I insist on't still,' says I; for I was in the habit of talking mighty plain to him, and joking him pretty hard sometimes. 'If I had this farm, I'd show you enterprise. You wouldn't see the hogs in the garden half the time, just for want of a good fence to keep 'em out. You wouldn't see the very best strip of land lying waste, just for want of a ditch. You wouldn't see that stone wall by the road tumbling down year after year, till by and by you won't be able to see it for the weeds and thistles.'

"'Yes,' says he sarcastically, 'ye'd lay out ten times as much money on the place as ye'd ever git back agin, I've no doubt. But I believe in economy.'

"That provoked me a little, and I said, 'Economy! you're one of the kind of men that'll skin a flint for sixpence and spoil a jack-knife worth a shilling. You waste fodder and grain enough every three years to pay for a bigger barn—to say nothing of the inconvenience.'

"'Wal, Stark,' says he, grinning and scratching his head, 'I've made up my mind to have a bigger barn, if I have to steal one.'

"'That won't be the first thing you've stole neither,' says I.

"He flared up at that. 'Stole?' says he. 'What did I ever steal?'

"'Well, for one thing, the rails the freshet last spring drifted off from Talcott's land onto yours, and you grabbed: what was that but stealing?'

"'That was luck. He couldn't swear to his rails. By the way, they'll jest come in play now.'

"'They've come in play already,' says I. 'They've gone on to the old fences all over the farm, and I could use a thousand more without making much show.'

"'That's 'cause you're so dumbed extravagant with rails, as you are with everything else. A few loads can be spread from the fences here and there, as well as not. Harness up the team, boys, and git together enough to make about ten rods o' zigzag, two rails high.'

"'Two rails?' says Dave, who had a healthy contempt for the old man's narrow, contracted way of doing things. 'What's the good of such a fence as that?'

"'It'll be,' says I, 'like the single bar in music. When our old

singing-master asked his class once what a single bar was, Bill Wilkins spoke up and said, "It's a bar that horses and cattle jump over, and pigs and sheep run under." What do you expect to keep out with two rails?'

"'The *law*, boys, the *law*,' says Jedwort. I know what I'm about. I'll make a fence the *law* can't run under nor jump over; and I don't care a cuss for the cattle and pigs. You git the rails, and I'll rip some boards off'n the pig-pen to make stakes.'

"'Boards a'n't good for nothin' for stakes,' says Dave. 'Besides, none can't be spared from the pig-pen.'

"'I'll have boards enough in a day or two for forty pig-pens,' says Jedwort. 'Bring along the rails, and dump 'em out in the road for the present, and say nothin' to nobody.'

"We got the rails, and he made his stakes; and right away after dinner he called us out. 'Come, boys,' says he, 'now we'll astonish the natives.'

"The wagon stood in the road, with the last jag of rails still on it. Jedwort piled on his stakes, and threw on the crowbar and axe, while we were hitching up the team.

"'Now, drive on, Stark,' says he.

"'Yes; but where shall I drive to?'

"'To the old meetin'-house,' says Jedwort, trudging on ahead.

"The old meeting-house stood on an open common, at the north-east corner of his farm. A couple of cross-roads bounded it on two sides; and it was bounded on the other two by Jedwort's overgrown stone wall. It was a square, old-fashioned building, with a low steeple, that had a belfry, but no bell in it, and with a high square pulpit and high straight-backed pews inside. It was now some time since meetings had been held there; the old society that used to meet there having separated, one division of it building a fashionable chapel in the North Village, and the other a fine new church at the Centre.

"Now, the peculiarity about the old church property was, that nobody had any legal title to it. A log meeting-house had been built there when the country was first settled and land was of no account. In the course of time that was torn down, and a good framed house put up in its place. As it belonged to the whole community, no title, either to the house or land, was ever recorded; and it wasn't until after the society dissolved that the question came up as to how the property was to be disposed of. While the old deacons were carefully thinking it over, Jedwort was on hand to settle it by putting in his claim.

"'Now, boys,' says he, 'ye see what I'm up to.'

"'Yes,' says I, provoked as I could be at the mean trick, 'and I knew it was some such mischief all along. You never show any enterprise, as you call it, unless it is to get the start of a neighbour.'

"'But what *are* you up to, pa?' says Dan, who didn't see the trick yet.

"The old man says, 'I'm goin' to fence in the rest part of my farm.'

"'What rest part?'

"'This part that never was fenced; the old meetin'-house common.'

"'But, pa,' says Dave, disgusted as I was, 'you've no claim on that.'

"'Wal, if I ha'n't, I'll make a claim. Give me the crowbar. Now, here's the corner, nigh as I can squint'; and he stuck the bar into the ground. 'Make a fence to here from the wall, both sides. Now work spry, for there comes Deacon Talcott.'

"'Wal, wal!' says the Deacon, coming up, puffing with excitement; 'what ye doin' to the old meetin'-house?'

"'Wal,' says Jedwort, driving away at his stakes, and never looking up, 'I've been considerin' some time what I should do with 't, and I've concluded to make a barn on 't.'

"'Make a barn! make a barn!' cries the Deacon. 'Who give ye liberty to make a barn of the house of God?'

"'Nobody; I take the liberty. Why shouldn't I do what I please with my own prop'ty?'

"'Your own property—what do ye mean? 'Ta'n't your meetin'-house.'

"'Whose is't, if 't a'n't mine?' says Jedwort, lifting his turtle's head from between his horizontal shoulders, and grinning in the Deacon's face.

"'It belongs to the society,' says the Deacon.

"'But the s'ciety's pulled up stakes and gone off.'

"'It belongs to individooals of the society—to individooals.'

"'Wal, I'm an individooal,' says Jedwort.

"'You! you never went to meetin' here a dozen times in your life!'

"'I never did have my share of the old meetin'-house, that's a fact,' says Jedwort; 'but I'll make it up now.'

"'But what are ye fencin' up the common for?' says the Deacon.

"'It'll make a good calf-pastur'. I've never had my share o' the vally o' that either. I've let my neighbours' pigs and critters run on't long enough; and now I'm jest goin' to take possession o' my own.'

"'Your own!' says the Deacon in perfect consternation. 'You've no deed on't.'

"'Wal, have you?'

"'No—but—the society——'

"'The s'ciety, I tell ye,' says Jedwort, holding his head up longer than I ever knew him to hold it up at a time, and grinning all the while in Talcott's face—'the s'ciety is split to pieces. There

a'n't no s'ciety now, any more'n a pig's a pig arter you've butchered and e't it. You've e't the pig amongst ye, and left me the pen. The s'ciety never had a deed o' this 'ere prop'ty, and no man never had a deed o' this 'ere prop'ty. My wife's gran'daddy, when he took up the land here, was a good-natered sort of man, and he allowed a corner on't for his neighbours to put up a temp'rary meetin'-house. That was finally used up—the kind o' preachin' they had them days was enough to use up in a little time any house that wa'n't fireproof; and when that was preached to pieces they put up another shelter in its place. This is it. And now't the land a'n't used no more for the purpose 'twas lent for it goes back nat'rally to the estate 'twas took from, and the buildin's along with it.'

"'That's all a sheer fabrication,' says the Deacon. 'This land was never a part of what's now your farm any more than it was a part of mine.'

"'Wal,' says Jedwort, 'I look at it in my way, and you've a perfect right to look at it in your way. But I'm goin' to make sure o' my way by puttin' a fence round the hull concern.'

"'And you're usin' some of my rails for to do it with!' says the Deacon.

"'Can you swear 't they're your rails?'

"'Yes, I can; they're rails the freshet carried off from my farm last spring and landed on to yourn.'

"'So I've heard ye say. But can you swear to the partic'lar rails? Can you swear, for instance, 't this 'ere is your rail? or this 'ere one?'

"'No; I can't swear to precisely them two—but——'

"'Can you swear to these two? or to any one or two?' says Jedwort. 'No, ye can't. Ye can swear to the lot in general, but you can't swear to any partic'lar rail, and that kind o' swearin' won't stand law, Deacon Talcott. I don't boast of bein' an edicated man, but I know suthin' o' what law is, and when I know it I dror a line there, and I toe that line, and I make my neighbours toe that line, Deacon Talcott. Nine p'ints of the law is possession, and I'll have possession o' this 'ere house and land by fencin' on't in; and though every man 't comes along should say these 'ere rails belong to them, I'll fence it in with these 'ere very rails.'

"Jedwort said this, wagging his obstinate old head, and grinning with his face turned up pugnaciously at the Deacon; then went to work again as if he had settled the question, and didn't wish to discuss it any further.

"As for Talcott, he was too full of wrath and boiling indignation to answer such a speech. He knew that Jedwort had managed to get the start of him with regard to the rails by mixing a few of his own with those he had stolen, so that nobody could tell 'em apart; and he saw at once that the meeting-house was in danger of going the

same way, just for want of an owner to swear out a clear title to the property. He did just the wisest thing when he swallowed his vexation, and hurried off to alarm the leading men of the two societies, and to consult a lawyer. . . . The common was fenced in by sundown; and the next day Jedwort had over a house-mover from the North Village to look and see what could be done with the building. 'Can ye snake it over and drop it back of my house?' says he.

"'It'll be a hard job,' says old Bob, 'without you tear down the steeple fust.'

"But Jedwort said, 'What's a meetin'-house 'thout a steeple? I've got my heart kind o' set on that steeple, and I'm bound to go the hull hog on this 'ere concern now I've began.'

"'I vow,' says Bob, examining the timbers, 'I won't warrant but what the old thing'll all tumble down.'

"'I'll resk it.'

"'Yes; but who'll resk the lives of me and my men?'

"'Oh, you'll see if it's re'ly goin' to tumble and look out. I'll engage 't me and my boys 'll do the most dangerous part of the work. Dumbed if I wouldn't agree to ride in the steeple and ring the bell, if there was one.'

"It wasn't many days before Bob came over again, bringing with him this time his screws and ropes and rollers, his men and timbers, horse and capstan; and at last the old house might have been seen on its travels.

"It was an exciting time all around. The societies found that Jedwort's fence gave him the first claim to house and land, unless a regular siege of the law was gone through to beat him off—and then it might turn out that he would beat them. Some said fight him; some said let him be—the thing a'n't worth going to law for; and so, as the leading men couldn't agree as to what should be done, nothing was done. That was just what Jedwort had expected, and he laughed in his sleeve while Bob and his boys screwed up the old meeting-house, and got their beams under it, and set it on rollers, and slued it around, and slid it on the timbers laid for it across into Jedwort's field, steeple foremost, like a locomotive on a track.

"It was a trying time for the women-folks at home. Maria had declared that if her father did persist in stealing the meeting-house, she would not stay a single day after it, but would follow Dave, who had already gone away.

"That touched me pretty close, for, to tell the truth, it was rather more Maria than her mother that kept me at work for the old man. 'If you go,' says I, 'then there is no object for me to stay; I shall go too.'

"'That's what I supposed,' says she; 'for there's no reason in the world why you should stay. But then Dan will go; and who'll be left to take sides with mother? That's what troubles me. Oh, if

she could only go too! But she won't, and she couldn't if she would, with the other children depending on her. Dear, dear! what shall we do?'

"The poor girl put her head on my shoulder and cried; and if I should own up to the truth, I suppose I cried a little too. For where's the man that can hold a sweet woman's head on his shoulder, while she sobs out her trouble, and he hasn't any power to help her—who, I say, can do any less, in such circumstances, than drop a tear or two for company?

"'Never mind; don't hurry,' says Mrs. Jedwort. 'Be patient, and wait awhile, and it'll all turn out right, I'm sure.'

"'Yes, you always say, "Be patient, and wait!"' says Maria, brushing back her hair. 'But, for my part, I'm tired of waiting, and my patience has given out long ago. We can't always live in this way, and we may as well make a change now as ever. But I can't bear the thought of going and leaving you.'

"Here the two younger girls came in, and seeing that crying was the order of the day, they began to cry; and when they heard Maria talk of going, they declared they would go; and even little Willie, the four-year-old, began to howl.

"'There, there! Maria! Lottie! Susie!' said Mrs. Jedwort in her calm way; 'Willie, hush up! I don't know what we are to do; but I feel that something is going to happen that will show us the right way, and we are to wait. Now go and wash the dishes, and set the cheese.'

"That was just after breakfast, the second day of the moving; and sure enough, something like what she prophesied did happen before another sun.

"The old frame held together pretty well till along toward night, when the steeple showed signs of seceding. 'There she goes! She's falling now!' sung out the boys, who had been hanging around all day in hopes of seeing the thing tumble.

"The house was then within a few rods of where Jedwort wanted it; but Bob stopped right there, and said it wasn't safe to haul it another inch. 'That steeple's bound to come down, if we do,' says he.

"'Not by a dumbed sight, it a'n't,' says Jedwort. 'Them cracks a'n't nothin'; the j'ints is all firm yit.' He wanted Bob to go up and examine; but Bob shook his head—the concern looked too shaky. Then he told me to go up, but I said I hadn't lived quite long enough, and had a little rather be smoking my pipe on *terra firma*. Then the boys began to hoot. 'Dumbed if ye a'n't all a set of cowards,' says he. 'I'll go up myself.'

"We waited outside while he climbed up inside. The boys jumped on the ground to jar the steeple and make it fall. One of them blew a horn—as he said, to bring down the old Jericho—and another thought he'd help things along by starting up the horse and

giving the building a little wrench. But Bob put a stop to that; and finally out came a head from the belfry window. It was Jedwort, who shouted down to us: 'There a'n't a j'int or brace gin out. Start the hoss, and I'll ride. *Pass me up that 'ere horn, and——*'

"Just then there came a cracking and loosening of timbers, and we that stood nearest had only time to jump out of the way, when down came the steeple crashing to the ground, with Jedwort in it."

"I hope it killed the cuss," said one of the village story-tellers.

"Worse than that," replied my friend; "it just cracked his skull—not enough to put an end to his miserable life, but only to take away what little sense he had. We got the doctors to him, and they patched up his broken head; and by George it made me mad to see the fuss the women-folks made over him. It would have been my way to let him die; but they were as anxious and attentive to him as if he had been the kindest husband and most indulgent father that ever lived; for that's women's style: they're unreasoning creatures.

"Along towards morning we persuaded Mrs. Jedwort, who had been up all night, to lie down a spell and catch a little rest, while Maria and I sat up and watched with the old man. All was still except our whispers and his heavy breathing; there was a lamp burning in the next room; when all of a sudden a light shone into the windows, and about the same time we heard a roaring and crackling sound. We looked out, and saw the night all lighted up as if by some great fire. As it appeared to be on the other side of the house, we ran to the door, and there what did we see but the old meeting-house all in flames. Some fellows had set fire to it to spite Jedwort. It must have been burning some time inside, for when we looked out the flames had burst through the roof.

"As the night was perfectly still, except a light wind blowing away from the other buildings on the place, we raised no alarm, but just stood in the door and saw it burn. And a glad sight it was to us, you may be sure. I just held Maria close to my side, and told her that all was well—it was the best thing that could happen. 'Oh yes,' says she, 'it seems to me as though a kind Providence was burning up his sin and shame out of our sight.'

"I had never yet said anything to her about marriage—for the time to come at that had never seemed to arrive; but there's nothing like a little excitement to bring things to a focus. You've seen water in a tumbler just at the freezing-point, but not exactly able to make up its mind to freeze, when a little jar will set the crystals forming, and in a minute what was liquid is ice. It was the shock of events that night that touched my life into crystals—not of ice, gentlemen, by any manner of means.

"After the fire had got along so far that the meeting-house was a gone case, an alarm was given, probably by the very fellows that set it, and a hundred people were on the spot before the thing had done burning.

" Of course these circumstances put an end to the breaking up of the family. Dave was sent for, and came home. Then as soon as we saw that the old man's brain was injured so that he wasn't likely to recover his mind, the boys and I went to work and put that farm through a course of improvement it would have done your eyes good to see. The children were sent to school, and Mrs. Jedwort had all the money she wanted now to clothe them, and to provide the house with comforts, without stealing her own butter. Jedwort was a burden; but, in spite of him, that was just about the happiest family for the next four years that ever lived on this planet.

" Jedwort soon got his bodily health, but I don't think he knew one of us again after his hurt. As near as I could get at his state of mind, he thought he had been changed into some sort of animal. He seemed inclined to take me for a master, and for four years he followed me around like a dog. During that time he never spoke, but only whined and growled. When I said, ' Lie down,' he'd lie down; and when I whistled he'd come.

" I used sometimes to make him work; and certain simple things he would do very well as long as I was by. One day I had a jag of hay to get in; and, as the boys were away, I thought I'd have him load it. I pitched it on to the waggon about where it ought to lie, and looked to him only to pack it down. There turned out to be a bigger load than I had expected, and the higher it got the worse the shape of it, till finally, as I was starting it towards the barn, off it rolled, and the old man with it, head foremost.

" He struck a stone heap, and for a moment I thought he was killed. But he jumped up and spoke for the first time. ' *I'll blow it,*' says he, finishing the sentence he had begun four years before, when he called for the horn to be passed up to him.

" I couldn't have been much more astonished if one of the horses had spoken. But I saw at once that there was an expression in Jedwort's face that hadn't been there since his tumble in the belfry; and I knew that, as his wits had been knocked out of him by one blow on the head, so another blow had knocked 'em in again.

" ' Where's Bob? ' says he, looking all around.

" ' Bob? ' says I, not thinking at first who he meant. ' Oh, Bob is dead—he has been dead these three years.'

" Without noticing my reply, he exclaimed, ' Where did all that hay come from? Where's the old meetin'-house? '

" ' Don't you know? ' says I. ' Some rogues set fire to it the night after you got hurt, and burned it up.'

" He seemed then just beginning to realise that something extraordinary had happened.

" ' Stark,' says he, ' what's the matter with ye? You're changed.'

" ' Yes,' says I, ' I wear my beard now, and I've grown older! '

" ' Dumbed if 't a'n't odd! ' says he. ' Stark, what in thunder's the matter with *me*? '

"'You've had meeting-house on the brain for the past four years,' says I; 'that's what's the matter.'

"It was some time before I could make him understand that he had been out of his head, and that so long a time had been a blank to him.

"Then he said, 'Is this my farm?'

"'Don't you know it?' says I.

"'It looks more slicked up than ever it used to,' says he.

"'Yes,' says I; 'and you'll find everything else on the place slicked up in about the same way.'

"'Where's Dave?' says he.

"'Dave has gone to town to see about selling the wool.'

"'Where's Dan?'

"'Dan's in college. He takes a great notion to medicine, and we're going to make a doctor of him.'

"'Whose house is that?' says he, as I was taking him home.

"'No wonder you don't know it,' says I. 'It has been painted, and shingled, and had new blinds put on; the gates and fences are all in prime condition; and that's a new barn we put up a couple of years ago.'

"'Where does the money come from to make all these improvements?'

"'It comes off the place,' says I. 'We haven't run in debt the first cent for anything, but we've made the farm more profitable than it ever was before.'

"'That *my* house?' he repeated wonderingly as we approached it. 'What sound is that?'

"'That's Lottie practising her lesson on the piano.'

"'A pianer in my house?' he muttered. 'I can't stand that!' He listened. 'It sounds pooty though!'

"'Yes, it does sound pretty, and I guess you'll like it. How does the place suit you?'

"'It *looks* pooty.' He started. 'What young lady is that?'

"It was Lottie, who had left her music and stood by the window.

"'My dahter! ye don't say! Dumbed if she a'n't a mighty nice gal.'

"'Yes,' says I; 'she takes after her mother.'

"'Just then Susie, who heard talking, ran to the door.

"'Who's that agin?' says Jedwort.

"I told him.

"'Wal, *she's* a mighty nice-lookin' gal!'

"'Yes,' says I; '*she* takes after her mother.'

"Little Willie, now eight years old, came out of the wood-shed with a bow and arrow in his hand, and stared like an owl, hearing his father talk.

"'What boy is that? says Jedwort. And when I told him, he muttered, 'He's an ugly-looking brat!'

"'He's more like his father,' says I.

"The truth is, Willie was such a fine boy the old man was afraid to praise him for fear I'd say of him, as I'd said of the girls, that he favoured his mother.

"Susie ran back and gave the alarm, and then out came mother, and Maria with her baby in her arms—for I forgot to tell you that we had been married now nigh on to two years.

"Well, the women-folks were as much astonished as I had been when Jedwort first spoke, and a good deal more delighted. They drew him into the house, and I am bound to say he behaved remarkably well. He kept looking at his wife, and his children, and his grandchild, and the new paper on the walls, and the new furniture, and now and then asking a question or making a remark.

"'It all comes back to me now,' says he at last. 'I thought I was living in the moon, with a superior race of human bein's, and this is the place and you are the people.'

"It wasn't more than a couple of days before he began to pry around, and find fault, and grumble at the expense; and I saw there was danger of things relapsing into something like their former condition. So I took him one side and talked to him.

"'Jedwort,' says I, 'you're like a man raised from the grave. You was the same as buried to your neighbours, and now they come and look at you as they would at a dead man come to life. To you it's like coming into a new world; and I'll leave it to you now if you don't rather like the change from the old state of things to what you see around you to-day. You've seen how the family affairs go on—how pleasant everything is, and how we all enjoy ourselves. You hear the piano and like it; you see your children sought after and respected—your wife in finer health and spirits than you've ever known her since the day she was married; you see industry and neatness everywhere on the premises; and you're a beast if you don't like all that. In short, you see that our management is a great deal better than yours; and that we beat you even in the matter of economy. Now, what I want to know is this: whether you think you'd like to fall into our way of living, or return like a hog to your wallow?'

"'I don't say but what I like your way of livin' very well,' he grumbled.

"'Then,' says I, 'you must just let us go ahead as we have been going ahead. Now's the time for you to turn about and be a respectable man like your neighbours. Just own up and say you've not only been out of your head the past four years, but that you've been more or less out of your head the last four-and-twenty years. But say you're in your right mind now, and prove it by acting like a man in his right mind. Do that, and I'm with you—we're all with you. But go back to your old dirty ways, and you go alone. Now I sha'n't let you off till you tell me what you mean to do.'

" He hesitated some time, then said, ' Maybe you're about right, Stark ; you and Dave and the old woman seem to be doin' pooty well, and I guess I'll let you go on.' "

Here my friend paused, as if his story was done ; when one of the villagers asked, " About the land where the old meetin'-house stood—whatever was done with that ? "

" That was appropriated for a new school-house, and there my little shavers go to school."

" And old Jedwort, is he alive yet ? "

" Both Jedwort and his wife have gone to that country where meanness and dishonesty have a mighty poor chance—where the only investments worth much are those recorded in the Book of Life. Mrs. Jedwort was rich in that kind of stock ; and Jedwort's account, I guess, will compare favourably with that of some respectable people, such as we all know. I tell ye, my friends," continued my fellow-traveller, " there's many a man, both in the higher and lower ranks of life, that 'twould do a deal of good, say nothing of the mercy 'twould be to their families, just to knock 'em on the head, and make Nebuchadnezzars of 'em—then, after they'd been turned out to grass a few years, let 'em come back again, and see how happy folks have been, and how well they have got along without 'em.

" I carry on the old place now," he added. " The younger girls are married off ; Dan's a doctor in the North Village ; and as for Dave, he and I have struck ile. I'm going out to look at our property now."

WILLIAM JAMES STILLMAN
1828–1901

BILLY AND HANS

In my favourite summer resort at the lower edge of the Black Forest, the quaint old town of Laufenburg, a farmer's boy one day brought me a young squirrel for sale. He was a tiny creature, probably not yet weaned, a variation on the ordinary type of the European squirrel, dark grey instead of the usual red, and with black tail and ears, so that at first, as he contented himself with drinking his milk and sleeping, I was not sure that he was not a dormouse. But examination of the paws, with their delicate anatomy, so marvellously like the human hand in their flexibility and handiness, and the graceful curl of his tail, settled the question of genus; and mindful of my boyhood and a beloved pet of the American species of his genus, I bought him and named him Billy. From the first moment that he became my companion he gave me his entire confidence, and accepted his domestication without the least indication that he considered it captivity. There is generally a short stage of mute rebellion in wild creatures before they come to accept us entirely as their friends—a longing for freedom which makes precautions against escape necessary. This never appeared in Billy; he came to me for his bread and milk, and slept in my pocket, from the first, and enjoyed being caressed as completely as if he had been born under my roof. No other animal is so clean in its personal habits as the squirrel, when in health; and Billy soon left the basket which cradled his infancy, and habitually slept under a fold of my bedcover, sometimes making his way to my pillow and sleeping by my cheek; and he never knew what a cage was except when travelling, and even then for the most part he slept in my pocket, in which he went with me to the *table d'hôte*, and when invited out sat on the edge of the table and ate his bit of bread with a decorum that made him the admiration of all the children in the hotel, so that he accompanied me in all my journeys. He acquired a passion for tea, sweet and warm, and to my indulgence of this taste I fear I owe his early loss. He would, when placed on the breakfast table, rush to my cup and plunge his nose in when it was hot enough to scald him. This peculiar taste I could never account for. He had full liberty to roam in my room; but his favourite

resort was my work-table when I was at work ; and when his diet became nuts he used to hide them among my books, and then come to hunt them out again, like a child with its toys. I sometimes found my typewriter stopped, and discovered a hazel nut in the works. And when tired of his hide-and-seek he would come to the edge of the table and nod to me, to indicate that he wished to go into my pocket or be put down to run about the room ; and he soon made a gesture-language of movements of his head to tell me his few wants—food, drink, to sleep, or to take a climb on the highest piece of furniture in the room. He was from the beginning devoted to me, and naturally became like a spoiled child. If I gave him an uncracked nut, he rammed it back into my hand to be cracked for him with irresistible persistence. I did as many parents do, and indulged him, to his harm and to my own later grief. I could not resist that coaxing nodding, and gave him what he wished—tea when I had mine, and cracked his nuts, to the injury of his teeth, I was told.[1] In short, I made him as happy as I knew how.

Early in my possession of him I cast about if I might find in the neighbourhood a companion of the other sex for him ; and when finally I heard that in a village just across the Rhine there was a captive squirrel for sale, I sent my son with orders to buy it if a female. It turned out to be a male, but Michael bought it just the same—a bright, active, and quite unwilling prisoner, two months older than Billy, of the orthodox red, just tamed enough to take his food from the hand, but accustomed to be kept with his neck in a collar to which there was attached a fathom of light dog-chain. He refused with his utmost energy to be handled ; and as it was not possible to keep the little creature in the torture of that chain—for I refuse to keep a caged creature—I cut the collar and turned him loose in my chamber, where he kept reluctant company with Billy. The imprisonment of the half-tamed but wholly unreconciled animal was perhaps more painful to me than to him, and my first impulse was to turn him out into his native forest to take his chances of life ; but I considered that he was already too far compromised with Mother Nature for this to be prudent ; for having learned to take his food from a man, the first attack of hunger was sure to drive him to seek it where he had been accustomed to find it, and the probable consequence was being knocked on the head by a village boy, or at best recognised to a worse captivity than mine. He had no mother, and he was still little more than a baby, so I decided to keep him and make him as happy as he would let me. His name was Hans. Had I released him as I thought to do, I had

[1] This idea that a squirrel's teeth grow too long from not gnawing hard food is, I think, a mistake, as Billy's never grew beyond their proper form, nor did Hans's. Billy used to sharpen his teeth by grinding them together. I have often heard the process going on as he lay by my ear on my pillow at night. The cases known of long teeth requiring cutting off were probably due to the breaking of the opposing tooth.

saved myself one sorrow, and this history had lost its interest.

After a little strangeness the companionship between the two became as perfect as the utterly diverse nature of their squirrelships would permit. Billy was social and as friendly as a little dog, Hans always a little morose and not overready to accept familiarities; Billy always making friendly advances to his companion, which were at first unnoticed, and afterwards only submitted to with equanimity. It was as if Billy had assumed the position of the spoiled child of the family, and Hans reluctantly taken that of an elder brother who is always expected to make way for the pet and baby of the house. Billy was full of fun, and delighted to tease Hans when he was sleeping, by nibbling at his toes and ears, biting him playfully anywhere he could get at him; and Hans, after a little indignant bark, used to bolt away and find another place to sleep in. As they both had the freedom of my large bedroom—the door of which was carefully guarded, as Hans was always on the look-out for a chance to bolt out into the unknown—they had plenty of room for climbing, and comparative freedom; and after a little time Hans adopted Billy's habit of passing the night in the fold of my bed-rug, and even of nestling with Billy near my head. Billy was from the beginning a bad sleeper, probably owing to the tea, and in his waking moments his standing amusement was nibbling at Hans, who would finally break out of his sleep and go to the foot of the bed to lie—but never for long, for he always worked his way back to Billy and nestled down again. When I gave Hans a nut, Billy would wait for him to crack it, and deliberately take it out of his jaws and eat it, an aggression to which Hans submitted without a fight, or a snarl even, though at first he held to the nut a little; but the good humour and caressing ways of Billy were as irresistible with Hans as with us, and I never knew him to retaliate in any way.

No two animals of the most domesticated species could have differed in disposition more than these. During the first phase of Hans's life he never lost his repugnance to being handled, while Billy delighted in being fondled. The European squirrel is by nature one of the most timid of animals, even more so than the hare, being equalled in this respect only by the exquisite flying-squirrel of America; and when it is frightened, as, for instance, when held fast in any way, or in a manner that alarms it, it will generally bite even the most familiar hand, the feeling being apparently that it is necessary to gnaw away the ligature which holds it. Of course, considering the irreconcilability of Hans to captivity, I was obliged, much against my will, to get a cage for him to travel in; and I made a little dark chamber in the upper part of a wire bird-cage in which the two squirrels were put for travelling. During the first journeys the motion of the carriage or railway train made Hans quite frantic, while Billy took it with absolute unconcern. On stopping at a hotel, they were invariably released in my room,

where they raced about at will, climbing the highest pieces of furniture and the window-curtain, but always coming to sleep in the familiar fur railway-rug which was my bedcover. At this stage of his career Hans was perfectly familiarised—came to me for his food and drink, and climbed on me, getting on my hand when held out to him ; but always resisting being grasped round the body, and always watching diligently for a door left ajar.

Arriving at Rome, I fitted up a deep window recess for their home ; but they always had the run of the study, and Hans, while watching the chance-opened door, and often escaping into the adjoining rooms, made himself apparently happy in his new quarters, climbing the high curtains, racing along the curtain-poles, and at intervals making excursions to the top of the bookcase, though to both the table at which I was at work soon became the favourite resort, and their antics there were as amusing as those of a monkey. Toward the end of the year Billy developed an indolent habit, which I now can trace to the disease that finally took him from us ; but he never lost his love for my writing-table, where he used to lie and watch me at my work by the hour. Hans soon learned to climb down from their window-bench, and up my legs and arms to the writing-table, and down again by the same road when he was tired of his exercises with the pencils or penholders he found there, or of hunting out the nuts which he had hidden the day before among the books and papers ; but I never could induce him to stay in my pocket with Billy, who on cold days preferred sleeping there, as the warmth of my body was more agreeable than that of their fur-lined nest. There was something uncanny in Billy—a preternatural animal intelligence which one sees generally only in animals that have had training and heredity to work on. He used his little gesture-language with great volubility and on every occasion, insisting imperiously on my obeying his summons ; and one of the things which will never fade from my memory was the pretty way in which he used to come to the edge of the window-bench and nod his head to me to show that he wished to be taken ; for he soon learned that it was easier to call to me and be taken than it was to climb down the curtain and run across the room to me. He nodded and wagged his head until I went to him, and his flexible nose wrinkled into the grotesque semblance of a smile—he used all the seductive entreaty an animal could show ; so that we learned to understand each other so well that I rarely mistook his want, were it water or food, or to climb, or to get on my table, or rest in my pocket. Notwithstanding all the forbearance which Hans showed for his mischievous ways, and the real attachment he had for Billy, Billy clearly preferred me to his companion ; and when during the following winter I was attacked by bronchitis, and was kept in my bedroom for several days, my wife, going into the study after a day of my absence, found him in an extraordinary state of excitement, which she said resembled hysterics,

and he insisted on being taken. It occurred to her that he wanted me, and she brought him upstairs to my bedroom, when he immediately pointed with his nose to be taken to me ; and as she was curious to see what he would do, and stopped at the threshold, he bit her hand gently to spur her forward to the bed. When put on the bed, he nestled down in the fur of my bedcover perfectly contented. As long as I kept my room he was brought up every day, and passed the day on my bed. At other times the two slept together in an open box lined with fur, or, what they seemed greatly to delight in, a wisp of fragrant new-mown hay, or the bend of the window-curtain, so nestled together that it was hard to distinguish whether they were one or two. The attitudes they took in their sleep were so pretty that my daughter made many attempts to draw them in their sleep, but we found that even then they were in perpetual motion, and never in one pose long enough to get even a satisfactory sketch. Their restlessness in sleep was only interrupted when in my bedcover, and not always then.

Some instincts of the woods they were long losing the use of, as the habit of changing often their sleeping-places. I provided them with several, of which the ultimate favourite was the bag of the window-curtain ; but sometimes, when Billy was missing, he was found in my waste-paper basket, and even in the drawer of my typewriter desk, asleep. In their native forests these squirrels have this habit of changing their nests, and the mother will carry her little ones from one tree to another to hide their resting-place, as if she suspected the mischievous plans of the boys to hunt them ; and probably she does. But the nest I made my squirrels in their travelling carriage—of hard cardboard well lined with fur—suited the hiding and secluding ways of Hans for a long time best of all, and he abandoned it entirely only when he grew so familiar as not to care to hide. They also lost the habit of hiding their surplus food when they found food never wanting.

When the large cones of the stone-pine came into the market late in the autumn, I got some, to give them a taste of fresh nuts ; and the frantic delight with which Hans recognised the relation to his national fir-cones, far away and slight as it was, was touching. He raced around the huge and impenetrable cone, tried it from every side, gnawed at the stem and then at the apex, but in vain. Yet he persisted. The odour of the pine seemed an intoxication to him, and the eager satisfaction with which he split the nuts, once taken out for him—even when Billy was watching him to confiscate them when open—was very interesting ; for he had never seen the fruit of the stone-pine, and knew only the little seeds which the fir of the Northern Forest bears ; and to extricate the pine-nuts from their strong and hard cones was impossible to his tiny teeth, and I had to extract them for him. As for Billy, he was content to sit and look on while Hans gnawed, and to take the kernel from him when he

had split the shell; and the charming *bonhomie* with which he appropriated it, and with which Hans submitted to the piracy, was a study.

The friendship between the two was very interesting, for while Billy generally preferred being with me to remaining on his window-bench with Hans, he had intervals when he insisted on being with Hans, while the latter seemed to care for nothing but Billy, and would not willingly remain away from him as long as Billy lived. When the summer came again, being unable to leave them with servants or the housekeeper, I put them in their cage once more, and took them back to Laufenburg for my vacation. Hans still retained his impatience at the confinement even of my large chamber, and with a curious diligence watched the door for a crack to escape by, though in all other respects he seemed happy and at home, and perfectly familiar; and though always in this period of his life shy with strangers, he climbed over me with perfect *nonchalancē*. Billy, on the contrary, refused freedom, and when I took him out into his native woods he ran about a little, and came back to find his place in my pocket as naturally as if it had been his birth-nest. But the apparent yearning of Hans for liberty was to me an exquisite pain. He would get up on the window-bench, looking out one way on the rushing Rhine, and the other on the stretching pine forest, and stand with one paw on the sash and the other laid across his breast, and turn his bright black eyes from one to the other view incessantly, and with a look of passionate eagerness which made my heart ache. If I could have found a friendly park where he could have been turned loose in security from hunger, the danger of hunting boys, and the snares which beset a wild life, I would have released him at once. I never so felt the wrong and mutual pain of imprisonment of God's free creatures as then with poor Hans, whose independent spirit had always made him the favourite of the two with my wife; and now that the little drama of their lives is over, and Nature has taken them both to herself again, I can never think of this pretty little creature, with his eager outlook over the Rhineland, without tears. But in the Rhineland, under the pretext that they eat off the top twigs of the pine-trees, and so spoil their growth, they hunt the poor things with a malignancy that makes it a wonder that there is one left to be captured, and Hans's chance of life in those regions was the very least a creature could have. We have seen that the poor little creatures, when famished, will eat the young twigs of trees; but in my opinion the accusation is that of the wolf who wants an excuse to eat the lamb. Hans and Billy were both fond of roses and lettuce; but nothing else in the way of vegetation other than nuts and a very little fruit would they eat.

The evolutionists tell us that we are descended from some common ancestor of the monkey and the man. It may be so; and if, as has been conjectured by one scientist, that ancestor was the lemur, which

is the link between the monkey and the squirrel, I should not object ; but I hope that we branched off at the *Sciurus*, for I would willingly be the near cousin of my little pets.

But before leaving Rome for my summer vacation at Laufenburg, the artificial habits of life, and my ignorance of the condition of squirrel health, had begun to work on Billy their usual consequences. He had begun to droop, and symptoms of some organic malady appeared. Though he grew more and more devoted to me, his ambition to climb and disport himself diminished, and it was clear that his civilised life had done for him what it does for many of us—shortened his existence. He never showed signs of pain, but grew more sluggish, and would come to me and rest, licking my hand like a little dog, and was as happy as his nature could show. They both hailed again with greedy enthusiasm the first nuts, fresh and crisp, and the first peaches, which I went to Bâsle to purchase for them, and of which they ate small morsels ; and what the position permitted me I supplied them with, with a guilty feeling that I could never atone for what they lost with freedom. I tried to make them happy in any way in my limited abilities, and, the vacation over, we went back to Rome and the fresh pine-cones and their window niche.

But there Billy grew rapidly worse, and I realised that a crisis had come to our little *ménage*. He grew apathetic, and would lie with his great black eyes looking into space, as if in a dream. It became a tragedy for me, for the symptoms were the same as those of a dear little fellow who had first rejoiced my father's heart in the years gone by, and who lies in an old English churchyard ; whose last hours I watched lapsing painlessly into the eternity beyond, and he, thank God ! understanding nothing of the great change. When he could no longer speak, he beckoned me to lay my head on the same pillow. He died of blood-poisoning, as I found after Billy's death that he also did ; and the identity of the symptoms (of the cause of which I then understood nothing) brought back the memory of that last solitary night when my boy passed from under my care, and his eyes, large and dark like Billy's, grew dim and vacant like his. Billy, too, clung the closer to me as his end approached ; and when the apathy left him almost no recognition of things around, he would grasp one of my fingers with his two paws, and lick it till he tired. It was clear that death was at hand, and on the last afternoon I took him out into the grounds of the Villa Borghese to lie in the sunshine, and get perhaps a moment of return to Mother Nature ; but when I put him on the grass in the warm light he only looked away into vacancy and lay still, and after a little dreamily indicated to me to take him up again ; and I remembered that on the day before his death I had carried Russie into the green fields, hoping they would revive him for one breathing-space, for I knew that death was on him ; and he lay and looked off

beyond the fields and flowers, and now he almost seemed to be looking out of dear little Billy's eyes. Billy signed to go into my pocket, and lay there, still, even in his apathy grasping my forefinger with his paws, and licking it as if in his approaching dissolution he still wished to show his love for me.

I went out to walk early the next morning, and when I returned I found Billy dead, still warm, and sitting up in his box of fresh hay in the attitude of making his toilet; for to the last he would wash his face and paws, and comb out his tail, even when his strength no longer sufficed for more than the mere form of it. I am not ashamed to say that I wept like a child.

The dear little creature had been to me not merely a pet to amuse my vacant hours, though many of those most vacant which the tired brain passes in its sleepless nights had been diverted by his pretty ways as he shared my bed, and by his singular devotion to me; but he had been as a door open into the world of God's lesser creatures, an apostle of pity and tenderness for all living things, and his memory stands on the eternal threshold, nodding and beckoning to me to enter in and make part of the creation I had ignored till he taught it to me, so that while life lasts I can no longer idly inflict pain upon the least of God's creatures. If it be true that "to win the secret of a plain weed's heart" gives the winner a clue to the hidden things of the spiritual life, how much more the conscient and reciprocal love which Billy and I bore—and I could gladly say still bear—each other, must widen the sphere of spiritual sympathy which, widening still, reaches at last the eternal source of all life and love, and finds indeed that one touch of nature makes all things kin. To me this fine contact with a subtle mute nature, and the intense sympathy between us, was the touching of a hitherto hidden vein of life which runs through the universe—it was as if a little fact had revealed to me, as the fall of the apple had to Newton the law of gravity, the great law of love which binds the God of our reverence to the last and lowest of His creatures, and makes Creation but one great fabric of spiritual affinities of which He is the weaver, and over the furthest threads of which come to Him the appeals of all His creatures:

> That thread of the all-sustaining beauty
> Which runs through all, and does all unite,

and through which we are conscious of the Divinity in and around us. Then I felt how it is that no sparrow falls without His knowledge, and how Billy and I were only two links of the same chain in which this eternal love bound us both to union in a common existence, if not a common destiny. There flashed on me, like a vision, the mighty truth, that this Love is the common life of all that lives. Living and dying, Billy has opened to me a window into the universe, of the existence of which I had no suspicion;

his little history has added a chamber to that eternal mansion into which my constant and humble faith assures me that I shall some time enter: he has helped me to a higher life. If love could confer immortality, he would share eternity with me, and I would thank the Creator for the companionship; and if I have any conception of the conditions of immortality, the love of my squirrel will no more leave me than that of my own children. And who knows? Thousands of human beings to whom we dare not deny the possession of immortal souls have not half Billy's claim to live for ever. May not the Indian philosopher, with his transmigration of souls, have had some glimpses of a truth?

But my history is only half told, for the revelation which Billy brought me was completed by Hans, by the finer touch of their mutual love. When I found the little creature dead, and laid him down in an attitude befitting death, Hans came to him, and making a careful and curious study of him, seemed to realise that something strange had come, and stretched himself out at full length on the body, evidently trying to warm it into life again, or feeling that something was wanting which he might impart, and this failing, began licking the body. When he found that all this was of no avail, and he seemed to realise—what must be strange even to us at our first acquaintance with it—that this was death—the last parting—and that Billy would no more respond to his brotherly love, he went away into the remotest corner of his window niche, refusing to lie any longer in their common bed, or stay where they had been in the habit of staying together. All day he would touch neither food nor drink, and for days following he took no interest in anything, hardly touching his food. Fearing that he would starve himself to death, I took him out on the large open terrace of my house, where, owing to his old persistent desire to escape, I had never dared trust him, and turned him loose among the plants. He wandered a few steps as if bewildered; looked all about him, and then came deliberately to me, climbed my leg, and went voluntarily into the pocket Billy loved to lie in, and in which, even in Billy's company, I had never been able to make Hans stay for more than a minute or so. The whole nature of the creature became changed. He reconciled himself to life, but never again became what he had been before. His gaiety was gone, his wandering ambitions were forgotten, and his favourite place was my pocket—Billy's pocket. From that time he lost all desire to escape; even when I took him out into the fields or woods he had no desire to leave me, but after a little turn and a half-attempt to climb a tree, would come back voluntarily to me, and soon grew as fond of being caressed and stroked as Bill had been. It was as if the love he bore Billy had changed him to Billy's likeness. He never became as demonstrative as Billy was, and to my wife, who was fond of teasing him, he always showed a little pique,

and even if buried in his curtain nest or in the fold of my rug, and asleep, he would scold if she approached within several yards of him; but to me he behaved as if he had consciously taken Billy's place. I sent to Turin to get him a companion, and the merchant sent me one guaranteed young and a female; but I found it a male, which died of old age within a few weeks of his arrival. Hans had hardly become familiarised with him when he died. The night before his death I came home late in the evening, and having occasion to go into my study, I was surprised, when I opened the door, to find Hans on the threshold, nodding to me to be taken, with no attempt to escape. I took him up, wondering what had disturbed him at an hour when he was never accustomed to be afoot, put him back in his bed, and went to mine. But thinking over the strange occurrence, I got up, dressed myself, and went down to see if anything was wrong, and found the new squirrel hanging under the curtain in which the two had been sleeping, with his hind claws entangled in the stuff, head down, and evidently very ill. He had probably felt death coming, and tried to get down and find a hiding-place, but got his claws entangled, and could not extricate them. He died the next day, and I took Hans to sleep in his old place in the fold of my bedcover, where, with a few days' interruption, he slept as long as he lived. He insisted, in fact, on being taken when his sleeping-time came; he would come to the edge of his shelf and nod to me till I took him, or if I delayed he would climb down the curtain and come to me. One night I was out late, and on reaching home I went to take him, and not finding him in his place, alarmed the house to look for him. After long search I found him sitting quietly under the chair I always occupied in the study. He got very impatient if I delayed for even a moment putting him to bed, and, like Billy, he used to nip my hand to indicate his discontent, gently at first, but harder and harder till I attended to him. When he saw that we were going upstairs to the bedroom he became quiet.

Whether from artificial conditions of life, or, as I am now convinced by greater experience of his kind, because he suffered from the loss of Billy (after whose death he never recovered his spirits), his hind legs became partially paralysed. He now ran with difficulty; but his eyes were as bright and his intelligence was as quick as ever, and his fore feet were as dexterous. His attachment to me increased as the malady progressed, and though from habit he always scolded a little when my wife approached him, he showed a great deal of affection for her toward the end, which was clearly approaching. Vacation had come again, and I took him once more with me to the Black Forest, hoping that his mysterious intelligence might find some consolation in his native air. He was evidently growing weak, and occasionally showed impatience as if in pain; but for the most of the time he rested quietly in my pocket, and

was most happy when I gave him my hand for a pillow, and at night he would seek out the hand, and lay his head on it with a curious persistence which showed a distinct pleasure in the contact, sometimes, though rarely, licking the fingers, for he was even then far more reserved in all his expressions of feeling than Billy. At times he would sit on the window-bench, and scan the landscape with something of the old eagerness that used to give me so much pain, snuffing the mountain air eagerly for a half-hour, and then nod to go into my pocket again; and at other times, as if restless, would insist, in the way he had made me understand, that, like a baby, he wanted motion, and when I walked about with him he grew quiet and content again. At home he had been very fond of a dish of dried rose-leaves, in which he would wallow and burrow, and my wife sent him from Rome a little bag of them, which he enjoyed weakly for a little. But in his last days the time was spent by day mostly in my pocket, and by night on my bed with his head on my hand. It was only the morning before his death that he seemed really to suffer, and then a great restlessness came on him, and a disposition to bite convulsively whatever was near him, so that when the spasm was on him I gave him a little chloroform to inhale till it had passed, and then he lay quietly in my hand until another spasm came on, and when he breathed his last in my pocket I knew that he was dead only by my hand on his heart. I buried him, as I had wished, in his native forest, in his bed of rose-leaves, digging a grave for him under a great granite boulder. He had survived his companion little more than six months, and if the readers of my little history are disposed to think me weak when I say that his death was to me a great and lasting grief, I am not concerned to dispute their judgment. I have known grief in all its most blinding and varied forms, and I thank God that He constituted me loving enough to have kept a tender place in my heart "even for the least of these," the little companions of two years; and but for my having perhaps shortened their innocent lives, I thank Him for having known and loved them as I have. I cannot to this day decide if I wronged them even unintentionally in depriving them of their liberty and introducing them to an artificial life. I possibly shortened their lives, but probably made them in the main happier than a wild and hunted life could have made them. Billy lived without care or unsatisfied desire, and died without pain. He loved me above all things, and who knows what love might have been to his little heart? Hans I rescued from a far more bitter form of imprisonment, and I would fain believe that the intensity of his life with me and Billy—the freedom from that fear which haunts the lives of all hunted creatures —compensated him for what he lost in the wild wood. And I will hope that this history will awaken in some sympathetic hearts a tenderness to the wild creatures, which shall, in the great balance

of gain and loss, weigh down the little loss of one poor beastie, sacrificed, not intentionally, to the good of his fellows. And this is, after all, the noblest and even of our human lives—to die that others may live.

THOMAS A. BURKE

B. 1828

POLLY PEABLOSSOM'S WEDDING

"My stars! that parson is *powerful* slow a-coming! I reckon he wa'n't so tedious gitting to his own wedding as he is coming here," said one of the bridesmaids of Miss Polly Peablossom, as she bit her lips to make them rosy, and peeped into a small looking-glass for the twentieth time.

"He preaches enough about the shortness of a lifetime," remarked another pouting miss, "and how we ought to improve our opportunities, not to be creeping along like a snail, when a whole wedding-party is waiting for him and the waffles are getting cold, and the chickens burning to a crisp."

"Have patience, girls. Maybe the man's lost his spurs, and can't get along any faster," was the consolatory appeal of an arch-looking damsel, as she finished the last of a bunch of grapes.

"Or perhaps his old fox-eared horse has jumped out of the pasture, and the old gentleman has to take it afoot," surmised the fourth bridesmaid.

The bride used industrious efforts to appear patient and rather indifferent amid the general restiveness of her aids, and would occasionally affect extreme merriment; but her shrewd attendants charged her with being fidgety and rather more uneasy than she wanted folks to believe.

"Helloo, Floyd!" shouted old Captain Peablossom, out of doors, to his copperas-trousered son, who was entertaining the young beaux of the neighbourhood with feats of agility in jumping with weights—"Floyd, throw down them rocks, and put the bridle on old Snip, and ride down the road and see if you can't see Parson Gympsey, and tell him hurry along: we are all waiting for him. He must think weddings are like his meetings, that can be put off to the 'Sunday after the fourth Saturday in next month,' after the crowd's all gathered and ready to hear the preaching. If you don't meet him, go clean to his house. I 'spect he's heard that Bushy Creek Ned's here with his fiddle, and taken a scare."

As the night was wearing on, and no parson had come yet to

unite the destinies of George Washington Hodgkins and "the amiable and accomplished" Miss Polly Peablossom, the former individual intimated to his intended the propriety of passing off the time by having a dance.

Polly asked her ma, and her ma, after arguing that it was not the fashion in her time, in North Car'lina, to dance before the ceremony, at last consented.

The artist from Bushy Creek was called in, and, after much tuning and spitting on the screws, he struck up "Money Musk"; and away went the country-dance, Polly Peablossom at the head, with Thomas Jefferson Hodgkins as her partner, and George Washington Hodgkins next, with Polly's sister Luvisa for his partner. Polly danced to every gentleman, and Thomas Jefferson danced to every lady; then up and down in the middle, and hands all round. Next came George Washington and his partner, who underwent the same process; and "so on through the whole," as *Daboll's Arithmetic* says.

The yard was lit up by three or four large light-wood fires, which gave a picturesque appearance to the groups outside. On one side of the house was Daniel Newman Peablossom and a bevy of youngsters, who either could not or did not desire to get into the dance—probably the former—and who amused themselves by jumping and wrestling. On the other side, a group of matrons sat under the trees, in chairs, and discoursed of the mysteries of making butter, curing chickens of the pip and children of the croup, besides lamenting the misfortunes of some neighbour, or the indiscretion of some neighbour's daughter who had run away and married a circus-rider. A few pensive couples, eschewing the "giddy dance," promenaded the yard and admired the moon, or "wondered if all them little stars were worlds like this." Perhaps they may have sighed sentimentally at the folly of the mosquitoes and bugs which were attracted round the fires to get their pretty little wings scorched and lose their precious lives; or they may have talked of "true love," and plighted their vows, for aught we know.

Old Captain Peablossom and his pipe, during the while, were the centre of a circle in front of the house, who had gathered around the old man's arm-chair to listen to his "twice-told tales" of "hair-breadth 'scapes," of "the battles and sieges he had passed"; for, you must know, the captain was no "summer soldier and sunshine patriot": he had burned gunpowder in defence of his beloved country.

At the especial request of Squire Tompkins, the captain narrated the perilous adventures of Newnan's little band among the Seminoles: how "bold Newnan" and his men lived on alligator-flesh and parched corn and marched barefooted through saw-palmetto; how they met Bowlegs and his warriors near Paine's Prairie, and what fighting was there. The amusing incident of

Bill Cone and the terrapin-shell raised shouts of laughter among the young brood, who had flocked around to hear of the wars. Bill (the "Camden Bard," peace to his ashes!), as the captain familiarly called him, was sitting one day against the logs of the breastwork, drinking soup out of a terrapin-shell, when a random shot from the enemy broke the shell and spilt his soup, whereupon he raised his head over the breastwork and sung out, "Oh you villain! you couldn't do that again if you tried forty times." Then the captain, after repeated importunities, laid down his pipe, cleared his throat, and sung:

> We marchèd on to our next station,
> The Injens on before did hide,
> They shot and killed Bold Newnan's nigger,
> And two other white men by his side.

The remainder of the epic we have forgotten.

After calling out for a chunk of fire and relighting his pipe, he dashed at once over into Alabama, in General Floyd's army, and fought the battles of Calebee and Otassee over again in detail. The artillery from Baldwin County blazed away, and made the little boys aforesaid think they could hear thunder, almost, and the rifles from Putnam made their patriotic young spirits long to revenge that gallant corps. And the squire was astonished at the narrow escape his friend had of falling into the hands of Weatherford and his savages, when he was miraculously rescued by Timpoochie Barnard, the Uchee chief.

At this stage of affairs, Floyd (not the general, but the ambassador) rode up, with a mysterious look on his countenance. The dancers left off in the middle of a set, and assembled around the messenger, to hear the news of the parson. The old ladies crowded up too, and the captain and the squire were eager to hear. But Floyd felt the importance of his situation, and was in no hurry to divest himself of the momentary dignity.

"Well, as I rode on down to Boggy Gut, I saw——"

"Who cares what the devil you saw?" exclaimed the impatient captain. "Tell us if the parson is coming first, and you may take all night to tell the balance, if you like, afterwards."

"I saw——" continued Floyd pertinaciously.

"Well, my dear, what did you see?" asked Mrs. Peablossom.

"I saw that some one had tooken away some of the rails on the cross-way, or they had washed away, or somehow——"

"Did anybody ever hear the like?" said the captain.

"And so I got down," continued Floyd, "and hunted some more, and fixed over the boggy place——"

Here Polly laid her hand on his arm and requested, with a beseeching look, to know if the parson was on the way.

"I'll tell you all about it presently, Polly. And when I got to the run of the creek, then——"

"Oh, the devil!" ejaculated Captain Peablossom. "Stalled again!"

"Be still, honey; let the child tell it in his own way. He always would have his way, you know, since we had to humour him so when he had the measles," interposed the old lady.

Daniel Newnan Peablossom, at this juncture, facetiously lay down on the ground, with the root of an old oak for his pillow, and called out yawningly to his pa to "wake him when brother Floyd had crossed over the run of the creek and arrived safely at the parson's." This caused loud laughter.

Floyd simply noticed it by observing to his brother, "Yes, you think you're mighty smart before all these folks!" and resumed his tedious route to Parson Gympsey's, with as little prospect of reaching the end of his story as ever.

Mrs. Peablossom tried to coax him to "jest" say if the parson was coming or not. Polly begged him, and all the bridesmaids implored. But Floyd "went on his way rejoicing," "When I came to the Piney Flat," he continued, "old Snip seed something white over in the baygall, and shied clean out o' the road, and——" Where he would have stopped would be hard to say, if the impatient captain had not interfered.

That gentleman, with a peculiar glint of the eye, remarked, "Well, there's one way I can bring him to a showing," as he took a large horn from between the logs, and rung a "wood-note wild," that set a pack of hounds to yelping. A few more notes, as loud as those that issued from "Roland's horn at Roncesvalles," was sufficient invitation to every hound, foist, and "cur of low degree," that followed the guests, to join in the chorus. The captain was a man of good lungs, and "the way he *did* blow was the way," as Squire Tompkins afterwards very happily describe it; and, as there were in the canine choir some thirty voices of every key, the music may be imagined better than described. Miss Tabitha Tidwell, the first bridesmaid, put her hands to her ears and cried out, "My stars! we shall all git blowed away!"

The desired effect of abbreviating the messenger's story was produced, as that prolix personage in copperas pants was seen to take Polly aside and whisper something in her ear.

"Oh Floyd, you are joking! you oughtn't to serve me so. An't you joking, bud?" asked Polly, with a look that seemed to beg he would say yes.

"It's true as preaching," he replied: "the cake's all dough!"

Polly whispered something to her mother, who threw up her hands, and exclaimed, "Oh my!" and then whispered the secret to some other lady, and away it went. Such whispering and throwing up of hands and eyes is rarely seen at a Quaker meeting. Consternation was in every face. Poor Polly was a very

personification of " Patience on a monument, smiling at green and yellow Melancholy."

The captain, discovering that something was the matter, drove off the dogs, and inquired what had happened to cause such confusion. " What the devil's the matter now ? " he said. " You all look as down in the mouth as we did on the Santafee when the quartermaster said the provisions had all give out. What's the matter ? Won't somebody tell me ? Old 'oman, has the dogs got into the kitchen and eat up all the supper ? or what else has come to pass ? Out with it ! "

" Ah, old man, bad news ! " said the wife, with a sigh.

" Well, what is it ? You are all getting as bad as Floyd, terrifying a fellow to death."

" Parson Gympsey was digging a new horse-trough, and cut his leg to the bone with a foot-adze and can't come. Oh, dear ! "

" I wish he had taken a fancy to 'a' done it a week ago, so we mout 'a' got another parson ; or, as long as no other time would suit but to-day, I wish he had cut his derned eternal head off ! "

" Oh, my ! husband ! " exclaimed Mrs. Peablossom. Bushy Creek Ned, standing in the piazza with his fiddle, struck up the old tune of

> **We'll dance all night, till broad daylight,**
> **And go home with the gals in the morning.**

Ned's hint caused a movement towards the dancing-room among the young people, when the captain, as if waking from a reverie, exclaimed, in a loud voice, " Oh, the devel ! what are we all thinking of ? Why, here's Squire Tompkins ; he can perform the ceremony. If a man can't marry folks, what's the use of being squire at all ? "

Manna did not come in better time to the children of Israel in the wilderness than did this discovery of the worthy captain to the company assembled. It was as vivifying as a shower of rain on corn that is about to shoot and tassel, especially to G. W. Hodgkins and his lady-love.

Squire Tompkins was a newly-elected magistrate, and somewhat diffident of his abilities in this untried department. He expressed a hint of the sort, which the captain only noticed with the exclamation, " Hoot, toot ! "

Mrs. Peablossom insinuated to her husband that in her day the " quality," or better sort of people, in North Car'lina, had a prejudice ag'in' being married by a magistrate ; to which the old gentleman replied, " None of your nonsense, old lady ; none of your Duplin County aristocracy about here now. The better sort of people, I think you say ! Now, you know North Car'lina ain't the best State in the Union, no how, and Duplin's the poorest county in the State. Better sort of people, is it ? Quality, eh ? Who the devil's better than we are ? Ain't we honest ? Ain't

we raised our children decent, and learned them how to read, write, and cipher ? Ain't I fou't under Newnan and Floyd for the country ? Why, darn it ! we are the very best sort of people. Stuff ! nonsense ! The wedding shall go on ; Polly shall have a husband."

Mrs. P.'s eyes lit up, her cheek flushed, as she heard " the old North State " spoken of so disparagingly ; but she was a woman of good sense, and reserved the castigation for a future curtain lecture.

Things were soon arranged for the wedding ; and as the old wooden clock on the mantelpiece struck one, the bridal party were duly arranged on the floor, and the crowd gathered round, eager to observe every twinkle of the bridgroom's eye and every blush of the blooming bride.

The bridesmaids and their male attendants were arranged in couples, as in a cotillon, to form a hollow square, in the centre of which were the squire and betrothing parties. Each of the attendants bore a candle ; Miss Tabitha held hers in a long brass candlestick which had belonged to Polly's grandmother, in shape and length somewhat resembling Cleopatra's Needle ; Miss Luvisa bore a flat tin one ; the third attendant bore such an article as is usually suspended on a nail against the wall ; and the fourth had a curiously-devised something cut out of wood with a pocket-knife. For want of a further supply of candlesticks, the male attendants held naked candles in their hands. Polly was dressed in white, and wore a bay flower with its green leaves in her hair, and the whisper went round, " Now *don't* she look pretty ? " George Washington Hodgkins rejoiced in a white satin stock and a vest and pantaloons of orange colour ; the vest was straight-collared, like a Continental officer's in the Revolution, and had eagle buttons on it. They were a fine-looking couple.

When everything was ready, a pause ensued, and all eyes were turned on the squire, who seemed to be undergoing a mental agony such as Fourth-of-July orators feel when they forget their speeches, or a boy at an exhibition when he has to be prompted from behind the scenes. The truth was, Squire Tompkins was a man of forms, but had always taken them from form-books, and never trusted his memory. On this occasion he had no " Georgia Justice " or any other book from which to read the marriage ceremony, and was at a loss how to proceed. He thought over everything he had ever learned " by heart," even to

> Thirty days hath the month of September ;
> The same may be said of June, April, November.

but all in vain ; he could recollect nothing that suited such an occasion. A suppressed titter all over the room admonished him that he must proceed with something, and, in the agony of desperation, he began :

" Know all men by these presents that I——" Here he paused,

and looked up to the ceiling, while an audible voice in a corner of the room was heard to say, " He's drawing up a deed to a tract of land," and they all laughed.

" In the name of God, Amen ! " he began a second time, only to hear another voice, in a loud whisper, say, " He's making his will, now. I thought he couldn't live long, he looks so powerful bad."

" Now I lay me down to sleep,
I pray the Lord——"

was the next essay, when some erudite gentleman remarked, " He is not dead, but sleepeth."

" O yes ! O yes ! " continued the squire. One voice replied, " Oh, no ! oh, no ! don't let's " ; another whispered, " No bail ! " Some person out of doors sang out, " Come into court ! " and the laughter was general. The bridesmaids spilt the tallow from their candles all over the floor, in the vain attempt to look serious. One of them had a red mark on her lip for a month afterwards, where she had bit it. The bridegroom put his hands in his pockets, and took them out again ; the bride looked as if she would faint ; and so did the squire.

But the squire was an indefatigable man, and kept trying. His next effort was :

" To all and singular the sher——" " Let's run ! he's going to level on us," said two or three at once.

Here a gleam of light flashed across the face of Squire Tompkins. That dignitary looked around all at once, with as much satisfaction as Archimedes could have felt when he discovered the method of ascertaining the specific gravity of bodies. In a grave and dignified manner, he said, " Mr. Hodgkins, hold up your right hand." George Washington obeyed, and held up his hand. " Miss Polly, hold up yours." Polly in confusion held up her left hand. " The other hand, Miss Peablossom." And the squire proceeded, in a loud and composed manner, to qualify them : " You and each of you do solemnly swear, in the presence of Almighty God and the present company, that you will perform toward each other all and singular the functions of husband and wife, as the case may be, to the best of your knowledge and ability, so help you God ! "

" Good as wheat ! " said Captain Peablossom. " Polly, my gal, come and kiss your old father : I never felt so happy since the day I was discharged from the army and set out homeward to see your mother."

"DOING" A SHERIFF

THOMAS A. BURKE

MANY persons in the county of Hall, State of Georgia, recollect a queer old customer who used to visit the county site regularly on "general muster" days and court week. His name was Joseph Johnson, but he was universally known as Uncle Josey. The old man, like many others of that and the present day, loved his dram, and was apt, when he got among "the boys" in town, to take more than he could conveniently carry. His inseparable companion on all occasions was a black pony, who rejoiced in the name of "General Jackson," and whose diminutiveness and sagacity were alike remarkable.

One day, while court was in session in the little village of Gainesville, the attention of the judge and bar was attracted by a rather unusual noise at the door. Looking towards that aperture, "his honour" discovered the aforesaid pony and rider deliberately entering the hall of justice. This, owing to the fact that the floor of the courthouse was nearly on a level with the ground, was not difficult.

"Mr. Sheriff," said the judge, "see who is creating such a disturbance of this court."

"It's only Uncle Josey and Gin'ral Jackson, judge," said the intruder, looking up with a drunken leer—"jest me an' the Gin'ral come to see how you an' the boys is gettin' along."

"Well, Mr. Sheriff," said the judge, totally regardless of the interest manifested in his own and the lawyers' behalf by Uncle Josey, "you will please collect a fine of ten dollars from Uncle Josey and the General, for contempt of court."

"Look a-here, judge, old feller," continued Uncle Josey, as he stroked the "Gin'ral's" mane, "you don't mean to say it, now, do yer? This child hain't had that much money in a coon's age; and as for the Gin'ral here, I know he don't deal in no kind of quine, which he hain't done, 'cept fodder and corn, for these many years."

"Very well, then, Mr. Sheriff," continued his honour, "in default of the payment of the fine, you will convey the body of Joseph Johnson to the county gaol, there to be retained for the space of twenty-four hours."

"Now, judge, you ain't in right down good yearnest, is you? Uncle Josey hain't never been put into that there boardin'-house yet,

which he don't want to be, neither," appealed the old man, who was apparently too drunk to know whether it was a joke or not.

"The sheriff will do his duty immediately," was the judge's stern reply, who began to tire of the old man's drunken insolence. Accordingly, Uncle Josey and the "Gin'ral" were marched off towards the county prison, which stood in a retired part of the village. Arriving at the door, the prisoner was commanded by the sheriff to "light."

"Look a-here, Jess, horse-fly, you ain't a-gwine to put yer old uncle Josey in there, is yer?"

"'Bliged to do it, Uncle Josey," replied the sheriff. "Ef I don't, the old man [the judge] will give me *goss* when I go back. I hate it powerful, but I must do it."

"But, Jess, couldn't you manage to let the old man git away? Thar ain't nobody here to see you. Now, do, Jess. You know how I *fit* for you in that last run you had 'longer Jim Smith, what like to 'a' beat you for sheriff, which he would 'a' done it, if it hadn't been for yer uncle Josey's influence."

"I know that, Uncle Josey, but thar ain't no chance. My oath is very p'inted against allowin' anybody to escape. So you must go in, 'cos thar ain't no other chance."

"I tell you what it is, Jess: I'm afeard to go in thar. Looks too dark and dismal."

"Thar ain't nothing in thar to hurt you, Uncle Josey, which thar hain't been for nigh about six months."

"Yes, thar is, Jess. You can't fool me that a-way. I know thar is somethin' in thar to ketch the old man."

"No, thar ain't; I pledge you my honour thar ain't."

"Well, Jess, if thar ain't, you jest go in and see, and show Uncle Josey that you ain't afeard."

"Certainly. I ain't afeard to go in."

Saying which, the sheriff opened the door, leaving the key in the lock. "Now, Uncle Josey, what did I tell you? I knowed thar wa'n't nothin' in thar."

"Maybe thar ain't whar you are standin'; but jest le's see you go up into that dark place in the corner."

"Well, Uncle Josey," said the unsuspecting sheriff, "I'll satisfy you thar ain't nothin' thar either." And he walked towards the "dark corner." As he did so, the old man dexterously closed the door and locked it.

"Hello, thar!" yelled the frightened officer; "none o' yer tricks, Uncle Josey. This is carryin' the joke a cussed sight too far."

"Joke! I ain't a-jokin', Jess: never was more in yearnest in my life. Thar ain't nothin' in thar to hurt you, though; that's one consolation. Jest hold on a little while, and I'll send some of the boys down to let you out."

And, before the "sucked-in" sheriff had recovered from his

astonishment, the pony and his master were out of hearing.

Uncle Josey, who was not as drunk as he appeared, stopped at the grocery, took a drink, again mounted the "Gin'ral," and called the keeper of the grocery to him, at the same time drawing the key of the gaol from his pocket. "Here, Jeems, take this 'ere key, and ef the old man or any them boys up thar at the court-house inquires after Jess Runion, the sheriff, jest you give 'em this key and my compliments and tell 'em Jess is safe. Ketch 'em takin' in old Uncle Josey, will yer? Git up, Gin'ral: these boys here won't do to trust; so we'll go into the country, whar people's honest, if they *is* poor."

The sheriff, after an hour's imprisonment, was released, and severely reprimanded by the judge, but the sentence of Uncle Josey was never executed, as he never troubled the court again, and the judge thought it useless to imprison him with any hope of its effecting the slightest reform.

JONATHAN F. KELLY

circa 1830

A DESPERATE RACE

SOME years ago, I was one of a convivial party that met in the principal hotel in the town of Columbus, Ohio, the seat of government of the Buckeye State.

It was a winter's evening, when all without was bleak and stormy and all within were blithe and gay—when song and story made the circuit of the festive board, filling up the chasms of life with mirth and laughter.

We had met for the express purpose of making a night of it, and the pious intention was duly and most religiously carried out. The Legislature was in session in that town, and not a few of the worthy legislators were present upon this occasion.

One of these worthies I will name, as he not only took a big swath in the evening's entertainment, but he was a man *more* generally known than our worthy President, James K. Polk. That man was the famous Captain Riley, whose "Narrative" of suffering and adventures is pretty generally known all over the civilised world. Captain Riley was a fine, fat, good-humoured joker, who at the period of my story was the representative of the Dayton district, and lived near that little city when at home. Well, Captain Riley had amused the company with many of his far-famed and singular adventures, which, being mostly told before and read by millions of people that have seen his book, I will not attempt to repeat.

Many were the stories and adventures told by the company, when it came to the turn of a well-known gentleman who represented the Cincinnati district. As Mr. —— is yet among the living, and perhaps not disposed to be the subject of joke or story, I do not feel at liberty to give his name. Mr. —— was a slow believer of other men's adventures, and, at the same time, much disposed to magnify himself into a marvellous hero whenever the opportunity offered. As Captain Riley wound up one of his truthful though really marvellous adventures, Mr. —— coolly remarked that the captain's story was all very *well*, but it did not begin to compare with an adventure that he had, "once upon a time," on the Ohio, below the present city of Cincinnati.

"Let's have it!"—"Let's have it!" resounded from all hands.

"Well, gentlemen," said the Senator, clearing his voice for action and knocking the ashes from his cigar against the arm of his chair,—"gentlemen, I am not in the habit of spinning yarns of marvellous or fictitious matters; and therefore it is scarcely necessary to affirm upon the responsibility of my reputation, gentlemen, that what I am about to tell you I most solemnly proclaim to be truth, and——"

"Oh, never mind that: go on, Mr. ——," chimed the party.

"Well, gentlemen, in 18— I came down the Ohio River, and settled at Losanti, now called Cincinnati. It was at that time but a little settlement of some twenty or thirty log and frame cabins, and where now stand the Broadway Hotel and blocks of stores and dwelling-houses, was the cottage and corn-patch of old Mr. ——, the tailor, who, by the bye, bought that land for the making of a coat for one of the settlers. Well, I put up my cabin, with the aid of my neighbours, and put in a patch of corn and potatoes, about where the Fly Market now stands, and set about improving my lot, house, etc.

"Occasionally I took up my rifle and started off with my dog down the river, to look up a little deer, or *bar* meat, then very plenty along the river. The blasted red-skins were lurking about and hovering around the settlement, and every once in a while picked off some of our neighbours or stole our cattle or horses. I hated the red demons, and made no bones of peppering the blasted sarpents whenever I got a sight at them. In fact, the red rascals had a dread of me, and had laid a good many traps to get my scalp, but I wasn't to be catched napping. No, no, gentlemen, I was too well up to 'em for that.

"Well, I started off one morning, pretty early, to take a hunt, and travelled a long way down the river, over the bottoms and hills, but couldn't find no *bar* nor deer. About four o'clock in the afternoon I made tracks for the settlement again. By and by I sees a buck just ahead of me, walking leisurely down the river. I slipped up, with my faithful old dog close in my rear, to within clever shooting-distance, and just as the buck stuck his nose in the drink I drew a bead upon his top-knot, and over he tumbled, and splurged and bounded awhile, when I came up and relieved him by cutting his wizen——"

"Well, but what has that to do with an *adventure*?" said Riley.

"Hold on a bit, if you please, gentlemen; by Jove, it had a great deal to do with it. For while I was busy skinning the hind-quarters of the buck, and stowing away the kidney-fat in my hunting-shirt, I heard a noise like the breaking of brush under a moccasin up 'the bottom.' My dog heard it, and started up to reconnoitre, and I lost no time in reloading my rifle. I had hardly got my priming out before my dog raised a howl and broke through the brush towards me with his tail down, as he was not used to doing unless

there were wolves, painters [panthers], or Injins about.

" I picked up my knife, and took up my line of march in a skulking trot up the river. The frequent gullies on the lower bank made it tedious travelling there, so I scrabbled up to the upper bank, which was pretty well covered with buckeye and sycamore, and very little underbrush. One peep below discovered to me three as big and strapping red rascals, gentlemen, as you ever clapped your eyes on ! Yes, there they came, not above six hundred yards in my rear, shouting and yelling like hounds, and coming after me like all possessed."

" Well," said an old woodsman, sitting at the table, " you took a tree, of course."

" Did I ? No, gentlemen, I took no tree just then, but I took to my heels like sixty, and it was just as much as my old dog could do to keep up with me. I ran until the whoops of my red-skins grew fainter and fainter behind me, and, clean out of wind, I ventured to look behind me, and there came one single red whelp, puffing and blowing, not three hundred yards in my rear. He had got on to a piece of bottom where the trees were small and scarce. ' Now,' thinks I, ' old fellow, I'll have you.' So I trotted off at a pace sufficient to let my follower gain on me, and when he had got just about near enough I wheeled and fired, and down I brought him, dead as a door-nail, at a hundred and twenty yards ! "

" Then you skelp'd [scalped] him immediately ? " said the back-woodsman.

" Very clear of it, gentlemen ; for by the time I got my rifle loaded, here came the other two red-skins, shouting and whooping close on me, and away I broke again like a quarter-horse. I was now about five miles from the settlement, and it was getting towards sunset. I ran till my wind began to be pretty short, when I took a look back, and there they came, snorting like mad buffaloes, one about two or three hundred yards ahead of the other : so I acted possum again until the foremost Injin got pretty well up, and I wheeled and fired at the very moment he was ' drawing a bead ' on me : he fell head over stomach into the dirt, and up came the last one ! "

" So you laid for him, and——" gasped several.

" No," continued the " member," " I didn't lay for him, I hadn't time to load, so I laid my *legs* to ground and started again. I heard every bound he made after me. I ran and ran until the fire flew out of my eyes, and the old dog's tongue hung out of his mouth a quarter of a yard long ! "

" Phe-e-e-e-w ! " whistled somebody.

" Fact, gentlemen. Well, what I was to do I didn't know : rifle empty, no big trees about, and a murdering red Indian not three hundred yards in my rear ; and what was worse, just then it occurred to me that I was not a great ways from a big creek (now

called Mill Creek), and there I should be pinned at last.

"Just at this juncture, I struck my toe against a root, and down I tumbled, and my old dog over me. Before I could scrabble up——"

"The Indian fired!" gasped the old woodsman.

"He did, gentlemen, and I felt the ball strike me under the shoulder; but that didn't seem to put any embargo upon my locomotion, for as soon as I got up I took off again, quite freshened by my fall! I heard the red-skin close behind me coming booming on, and every minute I expected to have his tomahawk dashed into my head or shoulders.

"Something kind of cool began to trickle down my legs into my boots——"

"Blood, eh? for the shot the varmint gin you," said the old woodsman, in a great state of excitement.

"I thought so," said the Senator; "but what do you think it was?"

Not being blood, we were all puzzled to know what the blazes it could be; when Riley observed—

"I suppose you had——"

"Melted the deer-fat which I had stuck in the breast of my hunting-shirt, and the grease was running down my legs until my feet got so greasy that my heavy boots flew off, and one, hitting the dog, nearly knocked his brains out."

We all grinned, which the "member" noticing, observed—

"I hope, gentlemen, no man here will presume to think I'm exaggerating?"

"Oh, certainly not! Go on, Mr. ——," we all chimed in.

"Well, the ground under my feet was soft, and, being relieved of my heavy boots, I put off with double-quick time, and, seeing the creek about half a mile off, I ventured to look over my shoulder to see what kind of chance there was to hold up and load. The red-skin was coming jogging along, pretty well blowed out, about five hundred yards in the rear. Thinks I 'Here goes to load, anyhow.' So at it I went: in went the powder, and, putting on my patch, down went the ball about half-way, and off snapped my ramrod!"

"Thunder and lightning!" shouted the old woodsman, who was worked up to the top-notch in the "member's" story.

"Good gracious! wasn't I in a pickle! There was the red whelp within two hundred yards of me, pacing along and *loading up his rifle as he came*! I jerked out the broken ramrod, dashed it away, and started on, priming up as I cantered off, determined to turn and give the red-skin a blast, anyhow, as soon as I reached the creek.

"I was now within a hundred yards of the creek, could see the smoke from the settlement chimneys. A few more jumps, and I was by the creek. The Indian was close upon me: he gave a whoop, and I raised my rifle: on he came, knowing that I had

broken my ramrod and my load not down: another whoop! whoop! and he was within fifty yards of me. I pulled trigger, and——"

"And killed *him*?" chuckled Riley.

"No, *sir*! I missed fire!"

"And the red-skin——" shouted the old woodsman, in a frenzy of excitement.

"*Fired and killed me!*"

The screams and shouts that followed this finale brought landlord Noble, servants, and hostlers running upstairs to see if the house was on fire!

FITZ-JAMES O'BRIEN

1828–1862

THE DIAMOND LENS

I

From a very early period of my life the entire bent of my inclinations had been toward microscopic investigations. When I was not more than ten years old, a distant relative of our family, hoping to astonish my inexperience, constructed a simple microscope for me by drilling in a disk of copper a small hole in which a drop of pure water was sustained by capillary attraction. This very primitive apparatus, magnifying some fifty diameters, presented, it is true, only indistinct and imperfect forms, but still sufficiently wonderful to work up my imagination to a preternatural state of excitement.

Seeing me so interested in this rude instrument, my cousin explained to me all that he knew about the principles of the microscope, related to me a few of the wonders which had been accomplished through its agency, and ended by promising to send me one regularly constructed, immediately on his return to the city. I counted the days, the hours, the minutes that intervened between that promise and his departure.

Meantime I was not idle. Every transparent substance that bore the remotest resemblance to a lens I eagerly seized upon, and employed in vain attempts to realise that instrument the theory of whose construction I as yet only vaguely comprehended. All panes of glass containing those oblate spheroidal knots familiarly known as "bull's-eyes" were ruthlessly destroyed in the hope of obtaining lenses of marvellous power. I even went so far as to extract the crystalline humour from the eyes of fishes and animals, and endeavoured to press it into the microscopic service. I plead guilty to having stolen the glasses from my Aunt Agatha's spectacles, with a dim idea of grinding them into lenses of wondrous magnifying properties—in which attempt it is scarcely necessary to say that I totally failed.

At last the promised instrument came. It was of that order known as Field's simple microscope, and had cost perhaps about fifteen dollars. As far as educational purposes went, a better apparatus could not have been selected. Accompanying it was

a small treatise on the microscope—its history, uses, and discoveries. I comprehended then for the first time the *Arabian Nights' Entertainments*. The dull veil of ordinary existence that hung across the world seemed suddenly to roll away, and to lay bare a land of enchantments. I felt toward my companions as the seer might feel toward the ordinary masses of men. I held conversations with Nature in a tongue which they could not understand. I was in daily communication with living wonders such as they never imagined in their wildest visions. I penetrated beyond the external portal of things and roamed through the sanctuaries. Where they beheld only a drop of rain slowly rolling down the window-glass, I saw a universe of beings animated with all the passions common to physical life, and convulsing their minute sphere with struggles as fierce and protracted as those of men. In the common spots of mould, which my mother, good housekeeper that she was, fiercely scooped away from her jam-pots, there abode for me, under the name of mildew, enchanted gardens, filled with dells and avenues of the densest foliage and most astonishing verdure, while from the fantastic boughs of these microscopic forests hung strange fruits glittering with green and silver and gold.

It was no scientific thirst that at this time filled my mind. It was the pure enjoyment of a poet to whom a world of wonders has been disclosed. I talked of my solitary pleasures to none. Alone with my microscope, I dimmed my sight, day after day and night after night, poring over the marvels which it unfolded to me. I was like one who, having discovered the ancient Eden still existing in all its primitive glory, should resolve to enjoy it in solitude, and never betray to mortal the secret of its locality. The rod of my life was bent at this moment. I destined myself to be a microscopist.

Of course, like every novice, I fancied myself a discoverer. I was ignorant at the time of the thousands of acute intellects engaged in the same pursuit as myself, and with the advantage of instruments a thousand times more powerful than mine. The names of Leeuwenhoek, Williamson, Spencer, Ehrenberg, Schultz, Dujardin, Schact, and Schleiden were then entirely unknown to me, or, if known, I was ignorant of their patient and wonderful researches. In every fresh specimen of cryptogamia which I placed beneath my instrument I believed that I discovered wonders of which the world was as yet ignorant. I remember well the thrill of delight and admiration that shot through me the first time that I discovered the common wheel animalcule (*Rotifera vulgaris*) expanding and contracting its flexible spokes and seemingly rotating through the water. Alas, as I grew older, and obtained some works treating of my favourite study, I found that I was only on the threshold of a science to the investigation of which some of the greatest men of the age were devoting their lives and intellects!

As I grew up, my parents, who saw but little likelihood of anything

practical resulting from the examination of bits of moss and drops of water through a brass tube and a piece of glass, were anxious that I should choose a profession. It was their desire that I should enter the counting-house of my uncle, Ethan Blake, a prosperous merchant, who carried on business in New York. This suggestion I decisively combated. I had no taste for trade ; I should only make a failure ; in short, I refused to become a merchant.

But it was necessary for me to select some pursuit. My parents were staid New England people, who insisted on the necessity of labour, and therefore, although, thanks to the bequest of my poor Aunt Agatha, I should, on coming of age, inherit a small fortune sufficient to place me above want, it was decided that, instead of waiting for this, I should act the nobler part, and employ the intervening years in rendering myself independent.

After much cogitation I complied with the wishes of my family, and selected a profession. I determined to study medicine at the New York Academy. This disposition of my future suited me. A removal from my relatives would enable me to dispose of my time as I pleased without fear of detection. As long as I paid my Academy fees I might shirk attending the lectures if I chose ; and as I never had the remotest intention of standing an examination, there was no danger of my being " plucked." Besides, a metropolis was the place for me. There I could obtain excellent instruments, the newest publications, intimacy with men of pursuits kindred with my own —in short, all things necessary to ensure a profitable devotion of my life to my beloved science. I had an abundance of money, few desires that were not bounded by my illuminating mirror on one side and my object-glass on the other ; what, therefore, was to prevent my becoming an illustrious investigator of the veiled worlds ? It was with the most buoyant hope that I left my New England home and established myself in New York.

II

My first step, of course, was to find suitable apartments. These I obtained, after a couple of days' search, in Fourth Avenue ; a very pretty second floor, unfurnished, containing sitting-room, bedroom, and a smaller apartment which I intended to fit up as a laboratory. I furnished my lodgings simply, but rather elegantly, and then devoted all my energies to the adornment of the temple of my worship. I visited Pike, the celebrated optician, and passed in review his splendid collection of microscopes—Field's Compound, Hingham's, Spencer's, Nachet's Binocular (that founded on the principles of the stereoscope), and at length fixed upon that form known as Spencer's Trunnion Microscope, as combining the greatest number of improvements with an almost perfect freedom from tremor. Along with this I purchased every possible accessory—draw-tubes, micrometers, a

camera lucida, lever-stage, achromatic condensers, white cloud illuminators, prisms, parabolic condensers, polarising apparatus, forceps, aquatic boxes, fishing-tubes, with a host of other articles, all of which would have been useful in the hands of an experienced microscopist, but, as I afterward discovered, were not of the slightest present value to me. It takes years of practice to know how to use a complicated microscope. The optician looked suspiciously at me as I made these valuable purchases. He evidently was uncertain whether to set me down as some scientific celebrity or a madman. I think he was inclined to the latter belief. I suppose I was mad. Every great genius is mad upon the subject in which he is greatest. The unsuccessful madman is disgraced and called a lunatic.

Mad or not, I set myself to work with a zeal which few scientific students have ever equalled. I had everything to learn relative to the delicate study upon which I had embarked—a study involving he most earnest patience, the most rigid analytic powers, the steadiest hand, the most untiring eye, the most refined and subtle manipulation.

For a long time half my apparatus lay inactively on the shelves of my laboratory, which was now most amply furnished with every possible contrivance for facilitating my investigations. The fact was that I did not know how to use some of my scientific implements—never having been taught microscopics—and those whose use I understood theoretically were of little avail until by practice I could attain the necessary delicacy of handling. Still, such was the fury of my ambition, such the untiring perseverance of my experiments, that, difficult of credit as it may be, in the course of one year I became theoretically and practically an accomplished microscopist.

During this period of my labours, in which I submitted specimens of every substance that came under my observation to the action of my lenses, I became a discoverer—in a small way, it is true, for I was very young, but still a discoverer. It was I who destroyed Ehrenberg's theory that the *Volvox globator* was an animal, and proved that his "monads" with stomachs and eyes were merely phases of the formation of a vegetable cell, and were, when they reached their mature state, incapable of the act of conjugation, or any true generative act, without which no organism rising to any stage of life higher than vegetable can be said to be complete. It was I who resolved the singular problem of rotation in the cells and hairs of plants into ciliary attraction, in spite of the assertions of Wenham and others that my explanation was the result of an optical illusion.

But notwithstanding these discoveries, laboriously and painfully made as they were, I felt horribly dissatisfied. At every step I found myself stopped by the imperfections of my instruments. Like all active microscopists, I gave my imagination full play. Indeed, it is a common complaint against many such that they supply the defects of their instruments with the creations of their brains. I imagined

depths beyond depths in nature which the limited power of my lenses prohibited me from exploring. I lay awake at night constructing imaginary microscopes of immeasurable power, with which I seemed to pierce through all the envelopes of matter down to its original atom. How I cursed those imperfect mediums which necessity through ignorance compelled me to use! How I longed to discover the secret of some perfect lens, whose magnifying power should be limited only by the resolvability of the object, and which at the same time should be free from spherical and chromatic aberrations—in short, from all the obstacles over which the poor microscopist finds himself continually stumbling! I felt convinced that the simple microscope, composed of a single lens of such vast yet perfect power, was possible of construction. To attempt to bring the compound miscroscope up to such a pitch would have been commencing at the wrong end ; this latter being simply a partially successful endeavour to remedy those very defects of the simplest instrument which, if conquered, would leave nothing to be desired.

It was in this mood of mind that I became a constructive microscopist. After another year passed in this new pursuit, experimenting on every imaginable substance—glass, gems, flints, crystals, artificial crystals formed of the alloy of various vitreous materials—in short, having constructed as many varieties of lenses as Argus had eyes—I found myself precisely where I started, with nothing gained save an extensive knowledge of glass-making. I was almost dead with despair. My parents were surprised at my apparent want of progress in my medical studies (I had not attended one lecture since my arrival in the city), and the expenses of my mad pursuit had been so great as to embarrass me very seriously.

I was in this frame of mind one day, experimenting in my laboratory on a small diamond—that stone, from its great refracting power, having always occupied my attention more than any other—when a young Frenchman who lived on the floor above me, and who was in the habit of occasionally visiting me, entered the room.

I think that Jules Simon was a Jew. He had many traits of the Hebrew character : a love of jewellery, of dress, and of good living. There was something mysterious about him. He always had something to sell, and yet went into excellent society. When I say sell, I should perhaps have said peddle ; for his operations were generally confined to the disposal of single articles—a picture, for instance, or a rare carving in ivory, or a pair of duelling-pistols, or the dress of a Mexican *caballero*. When I was first furnishing my rooms, he paid me a visit, which ended in my purchasing an antique silver lamp, which he assured me was a Cellini—it was handsome enough even for that—and some other knick-knacks for my sitting-room. Why Simon should pursue this petty trade I never could imagine. He apparently had plenty of money, and had the *entrée* of the best houses in the city—taking care, however, I suppose, to drive no bargains within the

enchanted circle of the Upper Ten. I came at length to the conclusion that this peddling was but a mask to cover some greater object, and even went so far as to believe my young acquaintance to be implicated in the slave-trade. That, however, was none of my affair.

On the present occasion, Simon entered my room in a state of considerable excitement.

"*Ah! mon ami!*" he cried, before I could even offer him the ordinary salutation, "it has occurred to me to be the witness of the most astonishing things in the world. I promenade myself to the house of Madame—— How does the little animal—*le renard*—name himself in the Latin?"

"Vulpes," I answered.

"Ah! yes—Vulpes. I promenade myself to the house of Madame Vulpes."

"The spirit medium?"

"Yes, the great medium. Great heavens! what a woman! I write on a slip of paper many of questions concerning affairs of the most secret—affairs that conceal themselves in the abysses of my heart the most profound; and behold, by example, what occurs? This devil of a woman makes me replies the most truthful to all of them. She talks to me of things that I do not love to talk of to myself. What am I to think? I am fixed to the earth!"

"Am I to understand you, M. Simon, that this Mrs. Vulpes replied to questions secretly written by you, which questions related to events known only to yourself?"

"Ah! more than that, more than that," he answered, with an air of some alarm. "She related to me things—— But," he added after a pause, and suddenly changing his manner, "why occupy ourselves with these follies? It was all the biology, without doubt. It goes without saying that it has not my credence. But why are we here, *mon ami*? It has occurred to me to discover the most beautiful thing as you can imagine—a vase with green lizards on it, composed by the great Bernard Palissy. It is in my apartment; let us mount. I go to show it to you."

I followed Simon mechanically; but my thoughts were far from Palissy and his enamelled ware, although I, like him, was seeking in the dark a great discovery. This casual mention of the spiritualist, Madame Vulpes, set me on a new track. What if, through communication with more subtle organisms than my own, I could reach at a single bound the goal which perhaps a life of agonizing mental toil would never enable me to attain?

While purchasing the Palissy vase from my friend Simon, I was mentally arranging a visit to Madame Vulpes.

III

Two evenings after this, thanks to an arrangement by letter and the promise of an ample fee, I found Madame Vulpes awaiting me at

her residence alone. She was a coarse-featured woman, with keen and rather cruel dark eyes, and an exceedingly sensual expression about her mouth and under jaw. She received me in perfect silence, in an apartment on the ground floor, very sparely furnished. In the centre of the room, close to where Mrs. Vulpes sat, there was a common round mahogany table. If I had come for the purpose of sweeping her chimney, the woman could not have looked more indifferent to my appearance. There was no attempt to inspire the visitor with awe. Everything bore a simple and practical aspect. This intercourse with the spiritual world was evidently as familiar an occupation with Mrs. Vulpes as eating her dinner or riding in an omnibus.

"You come for a communication, Mr. Linley?" said the medium, in a dry, businesslike tone of voice.

"By appointment—yes."

"What sort of communication do you want—a written one?"

"Yes, I wish for a written one."

"From any particular spirit?"

"Yes."

"Have you ever known this spirit on this earth?"

"Never. He died long before I was born. I wish merely to obtain from him some information which he ought to be able to give better than any other."

"Will you seat yourself at the table, Mr. Linley," said the medium, "and place your hands upon it?"

I obeyed, Mrs. Vulpes being seated opposite to me, with her hands also on the table. We remained thus for about a minute and a half, when a violent succession of raps came on the table, on the back of my chair, on the floor immediately under my feet, and even on the window-panes. Mrs. Vulpes smiled composedly.

"They are very strong to-night," she remarked. "You are fortunate." She then continued, "Will the spirits communicate with this gentleman?"

Vigorous affirmative.

"Will the particular spirit he desires to speak with communicate?"

A very confused rapping followed this question.

"I know what they mean," said Mrs. Vulpes, addressing herself to me; "they wish you to write down the name of the particular spirit that you desire to converse with. Is that so?" she added, speaking to her invisible guests.

That it was so was evident from the numerous affirmatory responses. While this was going on, I tore a slip from my pocket-book and scribbled a name under the table.

"Will this spirit communicate in writing with this gentleman?" asked the medium once more.

After a moment's pause her hand seemed to be seized with a

violent tremor, shaking so forcibly that the table vibrated. She said that a spirit had seized her hand and would write. I handed her some sheets of paper that were on the table and a pencil. The latter she held loosely in her hand, which presently began to move over the paper with a singular and seemingly involuntary motion. After a few moments had elapsed she handed me the paper, on which I found written, in a large, uncultivated hand, the words, "He is not here, but has been sent for." A pause of a minute or so ensued, during which Mrs. Vulpes remained perfectly silent, but the raps continued at regular intervals. When the short period I mention had elapsed, the hand of the medium was again seized with its convulsive tremor, and she wrote, under this strange influence, a few words on the paper, which she handed to me. They were as follows:

"I am here. Question me.

"LEEUWENHOEK."

I was astounded. The name was identical with that I had written beneath the table, and carefully kept concealed. Neither was it at all probable that an uncultivated woman like Mrs. Vulpes should know even the name of the great father of microscopics. It may have been biology; but this theory was soon doomed to be destroyed. I wrote on my slip—still concealing it from Mrs. Vulpes—a series of questions which, to avoid tediousness, I shall place with the responses, in the order in which they occurred:

I.—Can the microscope be brought to perfection?

Spirit.—Yes.

I.—Am I destined to accomplish this great task?

Spirit.—You are.

I.—I wish to know how to proceed to attain this end. For the love which you bear to science, help me!

Spirit.—A diamond of one hundred and forty carats, submitted to electro-magnetic currents for a long period, will experience a rearrangement of its atoms *inter se*, and from that stone you will form the universal lens.

I.—Will great discoveries result from the use of such a lens?

Spirit.—So great that all that has gone before is as nothing.

I.—But the refractive power of the diamond is so immense that the image will be formed within the lens. How is that difficulty to be surmounted?

Spirit.—Pierce the lens through its axis, and the difficulty is obviated. The image will be formed in the pierced space, which will itself serve as a tube to look through. Now I am called. Good-night.

I cannot at all describe the effect that these extraordinary communications had upon me. I felt completely bewildered. No biological theory could account for the *discovery* of the lens. The

medium might, by means of biological *rapport* with my mind, have gone so far as to read my questions and reply to them coherently. But biology could not enable her to discover that magnetic currents would so alter the crystals of the diamond as to remedy its previous defects and admit of its being polished into a perfect lens. Some such theory may have passed through my head, it is true ; but if so, I had forgotten it. In my excited condition of mind there was no course left but to become a convert, and it was in a state of the most painful nervous exaltation that I left the medium's house that evening. She accompanied me to the door, hoping that I was satisfied. The raps followed us as we went through the hall, sounding on the balusters, the flooring, and even the lintels of the door. I hastily expressed my satisfaction, and escaped hurriedly into the cool night air. I walked home with but one thought possessing me—how to obtain a diamond of the immense size required. My entire means multiplied a hundred times over would have been inadequate to its purchase. Besides, such stones are rare, and become historical. I could find such only in the regalia of Eastern or European monarchs.

IV

There was a light in Simon's room as I entered my house. A vague impulse urged me to visit him. As I opened the door of his sitting-room unannounced, he was bending, with his back toward me, over a Carcel lamp, apparently engaged in minutely examining some object which he held in his hands. As I entered he started suddenly, thrust his hand into his breast pocket, and turned to me with a face crimson with confusion.

"What!" I cried, "pouring over the miniature of some fair lady? Well, don't blush so much ; I won't ask to see it."

Simon laughed awkwardly enough, but made none of the negative protestations usual on such occasions. He asked me to take a seat.

"Simon," said I, "I have just come from Madame Vulpes."

This time Simon turned as white as a sheet, and seemed stupefied, as if a sudden electric shock had smitten him. He babbled some incoherent words, and went hastily to a small closet where he usually kept his liquors. Although astonished at his emotion, I was too preoccupied with my own idea to pay much attention to anything else.

"You say truly when you call Madame Vulpes a devil of a woman," I continued. "Simon, she told me wonderful things to-night, or rather was the means of telling me wonderful things. Ah! if I could only get a diamond that weighed one hundred and forty carats!"

Scarcely had the sigh with which I uttered this desire died upon my lips when Simon, with the aspect of a wild beast, glared at

me savagely, and, rushing to the mantelpiece, where some foreign weapons hung on the wall, caught up a Malay creese, and brandished it furiously before him.

"No!" he cried in French, into which he always broke when excited. "No! you shall not have it! You are perfidious! You have consulted with that demon, and desire my treasure! But I will die first! Me, I am brave! You cannot make me fear!"

All this, uttered in a loud voice, trembling with excitement, astounded me. I saw at a glance that I had accidentally trodden upon the edges of Simon's secret, whatever it was. It was necessary to reassure him.

"My dear Simon," I said, "I am entirely at a loss to know what you mean. I went to Madame Vulpes to consult with her on a scientific problem, to the solution of which I discovered that a diamond of the size I just mentioned was necessary. You were never alluded to during the evening, nor, so far as I was concerned, even thought of. What can be the meaning of this outburst? If you happen to have a set of valuable diamonds in your possession, you need fear nothing from me. The diamond which I require you could not possess; or, if you did possess it, you would not be living here."

Something in my tone must have completely reassured him, for his expression immediately changed to a sort of constrained merriment, combined, however, with a certain suspicious attention to my movements. He laughed, and said that I must bear with him; that he was at certain moments subject to a species of vertigo, which betrayed itself in incoherent speeches, and that the attacks passed off as rapidly as they came. He put his weapon aside while making this explanation, and endeavoured, with some success, to assume a more cheerful air.

All this did not impose on me in the least. I was too much accustomed to analytical labours to be baffled by so flimsy a veil. I determined to probe the mystery to the bottom.

"Simon," I said gaily, "let us forget all this over a bottle of Burgundy. I have a case of Lausseure's *Clos Vougeot* downstairs, fragrant with the odours and ruddy with the sunlight of the Côte d'Or. Let us have up a couple of bottles. What say you?"

"With all my heart," answered Simon smilingly.

I produced the wine, and we seated ourselves to drink. It was of a famous vintage, that of 1848, a year when war and wine throve together, and its pure but powerful juice seemed to impart renewed vitality to the system. By the time we had half finished the second bottle, Simon's head, which I knew was a weak one, had begun to yield, while I remained calm as ever, only that every draught seemed to send a flush of vigour through my limbs. Simon's utterance became more and more indistinct. He took to singing French *chansons* of a not very moral tendency. I rose suddenly

from the table just at the conclusion of one of those incoherent verses, and, fixing my eyes on him with a quiet smile, said, " Simon, I have deceived you. I learned your secret this evening. You may as well be frank with me. Mrs. Vulpes—or rather, one of her spirits—told me all."

He started with horror. His intoxication seemed for the moment to fade away, and he made a movement toward the weapon that he had a short time before laid down. I stopped him with my hand.

" Monster ! " he cried passionately, " I am ruined ! What shall I do ? You shall never have it ! I swear by my mother ! "

" I don't want it," I said ; " rest secure, but be frank with me. Tell me all about it."

The drunkenness began to return. He protested with maudlin earnestness that I was entirely mistaken—that I was intoxicated ; then asked me to swear eternal secrecy, and promised to disclose the mystery to me. I pledged myself, of course, to all. With an uneasy look in his eyes, and hands unsteady with drink and nervousness, he drew a small case from his breast and opened it. Heavens ! How the mild lamplight was shivered into a thousand prismatic arrows as it fell upon a vast rose-diamond that glittered in the case ! I was no judge of diamonds, but I saw at a glance that this was a gem of rare size and purity. I looked at Simon with wonder and—must I confess it ?—with envy. How could he have obtained this treasure ? In reply to my questions, I could just gather from his drunken statements (of which, I fancy, half the incoherence was affected) that he had been superintending a gang of slaves engaged in diamond-washing in Brazil ; that he had seen one of them secrete a diamond, but, instead of informing his employers, had quietly watched the negro until he saw him bury his treasure ; that he had dug it up and fled with it, but that as yet he was afraid to attempt to dispose of it publicly—so valuable a gem being almost certain to attract too much attention to its owner's antecedents—and he had not been able to discover any of those obscure channels by which such matters are conveyed away safely. He added that, in accordance with oriental practice, he had named his diamond with the fanciful title of " The Eye of Morning."

While Simon was relating this to me, I regarded the great diamond attentively. Never had I beheld anything so beautiful. All the glories of light ever imagined or described seemed to pulsate in its crystalline chambers. Its weight, as I learned from Simon, was exactly one hundred and forty carats. Here was an amazing coincidence. The hand of destiny seemed in it. On the very evening when the spirit of Leeuwenhoek communicates to me the great secret of the microscope, the priceless means which he directs me to employ start up within my easy reach ! I determined, with the most perfect deliberation, to possess myself of Simon's diamond.

I sat opposite to him while he nodded over his glass and calmly revolved the whole affair. I did not for an instant contemplate so foolish an act as a common theft, which would of course be discovered, or at least necessitate flight and concealment, all of which must interfere with my scientific plans. There was but one step to be taken—to kill Simon. After all, what was the life of a little peddling Jew in comparison with the interests of science? Human beings are taken every day from the condemned prisons to be experimented on by surgeons. This man, Simon, was by his own confession a criminal, a robber, and I believed on my soul a murderer. He deserved death quite as much as any felon condemned by the laws: why should I not, like government, contrive that his punishment should contribute to the progress of human knowledge?

The means for accomplishing everything I desired lay within my reach. There stood upon the mantelpiece a bottle half full of French laudanum. Simon was so occupied with his diamond, which I had just restored to him, that it was an affair of no difficulty to drug his glass. In a quarter of an hour he was in a profound sleep.

I now opened his waistcoat, took the diamond from the inner pocket in which he had placed it, and removed him to the bed, on which I laid him so that his feet hung down over the edge. I had possessed myself of the Malay creese, which I held in my right hand, while with the other I discovered as accurately as I could by pulsation the exact locality of the heart. It was essential that all the aspects of his death should lead to the surmise of self-murder. I calculated the exact angle at which it was probable that the weapon, if levelled by Simon's own hand, would enter his breast; then with one powerful blow I thrust it up to the hilt in the very spot which I desired to penetrate. A convulsive thrill ran through Simon's limbs. I heard a smothered sound issue from his throat, precisely like the bursting of a large air-bubble sent up by a diver when it reaches the surface of the water; he turned half round on his side, and, as if to assist my plans more effectually, his right hand, moved by some mere spasmodic impulse, clasped the handle of the creese, which it remained holding with extraordinary muscular tenacity. Beyond this there was no apparent struggle. The laudanum, I presume, paralyzed the usual nervous action. He must have died instantly.

There was yet something to be done. To make it certain that all suspicion of the act should be diverted from any inhabitant of the house to Simon himself, it was necessary that the door should be found in the morning *locked on the inside*. How to do this, and afterward escape myself? Not by the window; that was a physical impossibility. Besides, I was determined that the windows *also* should be found bolted. The solution was simple enough. I descended softly to my own room for a peculiar instrument which I had used for holding small slippery

substances, such as minute spheres of glass, etc. This instrument was nothing more than a long, slender hand-vice, with a very powerful grip and a considerable leverage, which last was accidentally owing to the shape of the handle. Nothing was simpler than, when the key was in the lock to seize the end of its stem in this vice, through the keyhole, from the outside, and so lock the door. Previously, however, to doing this, I burned a number of papers on Simon's hearth. Suicides almost always burn papers before they destroy themselves. I also emptied some more laudanum into Simon's glass—having first removed from it all traces of wine—cleaned the other wine-glass, and brought the bottles away with me. If traces of two persons drinking had been found in the room, the question naturally would have arisen, Who was the second? Besides, the wine-bottles might have been identified as belonging to me. The laudanum I poured out to account for its presence in his stomach, in case of a *post-mortem* examination. The theory naturally would be that he first intended to poison himself, but, after swallowing a little of the drug, was either disgusted with its taste or changed his mind from other motives, and chose the dagger. These arrangements made, I walked out, leaving the gas burning, locked the door with my vice, and went to bed.

Simon's death was not discovered until nearly three in the afternoon. The servant, astonished at seeing the gas burning—the light streaming on the dark landing from under the door—peeped through the keyhole and saw Simon on the bed. She gave the alarm. The door was burst open, and the neighbourhood was in a fever of excitement.

Every one in the house was arrested, myself included. There was an inquest; but no clue to his death beyond that of suicide could be obtained. Curiously enough, he had made several speeches to his friends the preceding week that seemed to point to self-destruction. One gentleman swore that Simon had said in his presence that "he was tired of life." His landlord affirmed that Simon, when paying him his last month's rent, remarked that "he should not pay him rent much longer." All the other evidence corresponded—the door locked inside, the position of the corpse, the burned papers. As I anticipated, no one knew of the possession of the diamond by Simon, so that no motive was suggested for his murder. The jury, after a prolonged examination, brought in the usual verdict, and the neighbourhood once more settled down to its accustomed quiet.

V

The three months succeeding Simon's catastrophe I devoted night and day to my diamond lens. I had constructed a vast

galvanic battery, composed of nearly two thousand pairs of plates: a higher power I dared not use lest the diamond should be calcined. By means of this enormous engine I was enabled to send a powerful current of electricity continually through my great diamond, which it seemed to me gained in lustre every day. At the expiration of a month I commenced the grinding and polishing of the lens, a work of intense toil and exquisite delicacy. The great density of the stone, and the care required to be taken with the curvatures of the surfaces of the lens, rendered the labour the severest and most harassing that I had yet undergone.

At last the eventful moment came; the lens was completed. I stood trembling on the threshold of new worlds. I had the realisation of Alexander's famous wish before me. The lens lay on the table, ready to be placed upon its platform. My hand fairly shook as I enveloped a drop of water with a thin coating of oil of turpentine, preparatory to its examination, a process necessary in order to prevent the rapid evaporation of the water. I now placed the drop on a thin slip of glass under the lens, and throwing upon it, by the combined aid of a prism and a mirror, a powerful stream of light, I approached my eye to the minute hole drilled through the axis of the lens. For an instant I saw nothing save what seemed to be an illuminated chaos, a vast luminous abyss. A pure white light, cloudless and serene, and seemingly limitless as space itself, was my first impression. Gently, and with the greatest care, I depressed the lens a few hairbreadths. The wondrous illumination still continued, but as the lens approached the object a scene of indescribable beauty was unfolded to my view.

I seemed to gaze upon a vast space, the limits of which extended far beyond my vision. An atmosphere of magical luminousness permeated the entire field of view. I was amazed to see no trace of animalculous life. Not a living thing, apparently, inhabited that dazzling expanse. I comprehended instantly that, by the wondrous power of my lens, I had penetrated beyond the grosser particles of aqueous matter, beyond the realms of infusoria and protozoa, down to the original gaseous globule, into whose luminous interior I was gazing as into an almost boundless dome filled with a supernatural radiance.

It was, however, no brilliant void into which I looked. On every side I beheld beautiful inorganic forms, of unknown texture, and coloured with the most enchanting hues. These forms presented the appearance of what might be called, for want of a more specific definition, foliated clouds of the highest rarity—that is, they undulated and broke into vegetable formations, and were tinged with splendours compared with which the gilding of our autumn woodlands is as dross compared with gold. Far away into the illimitable distance stretched long avenues of these gaseous forests, dimly transparent, and painted with prismatic hues of unimaginable

brilliancy. The pendent branches waved along the fluid glades until every vista seemed to break through half-lucent ranks of many-coloured drooping silken pennons. What seemed to be either fruits or flowers, pied with a thousand hues, lustrous and ever-varying, bubbled from the crowns of this fairy foliage. No hills, no lakes, no rivers, no forms animate or inanimate, were to be seen save those vast auroral copses that floated serenely in the luminous stillness, with leaves and fruits and flowers gleaming with unknown fires, unrealisable by mere imagination.

How strange, I thought, that this sphere should be thus condemned to solitude! I had hoped, at least, to discover some new form of animal life, perhaps of a lower class than any with which we are at present acquainted, but still some living organism. I found my newly discovered world, if I may so speak, a beautiful chromatic desert.

While I was speculating on the singular arrangements of the internal economy of Nature, with which she so frequently splinters into atoms our most compact theories, I thought I beheld a form moving slowly through the glades of one of the prismatic forests. I looked more attentively, and found that I was not mistaken. Words cannot depict the anxiety with which I awaited the nearer approach of this mysterious object. Was it merely some inanimate substance, held in suspense in the attenuated atmosphere of the globule, or was it an animal endowed with vitality and motion? It approached, flitting behind the gauzy, coloured veils of cloud-foliage, for seconds dimly revealed, then vanishing. At last the violent pennons that trailed nearest to me vibrated; they were gently pushed aside, and the form floated out into the broad light.

It was a female human shape. When I say human, I mean it possessed the outlines of humanity; but there the analogy ends. Its adorable beauty lifted it illimitable heights beyond the loveliest daughter of Adam.

I cannot, I dare not, attempt to inventory the charms of this divine revelation of perfect beauty. Those eyes of mystic violet, dewy and serene, evade my words. Her long, lustrous hair following her glorious head in a golden wake, like the track sown in heaven by a falling star, seems to quench my most burning phrases with its splendours. If all the bees of Hybla nestled upon my lips, they would still sing but hoarsely the wondrous harmonies of outline that inclosed her form.

She swept out from between the rainbow-curtains of the cloud-trees into the broad sea of light that lay beyond. Her motions were those of some graceful naiad, cleaving, by a mere effort of her will, the clear, unruffled waters that fill the chambers of the sea. She floated forth with the serene grace of a frail bubble ascending through the still atmosphere of a June day. The perfect roundness

of her limbs formed suave and enchanting curves. It was like listening to the most spiritual symphony of Beethoven the divine to watch the harmonious flow of lines. This, indeed, was a pleasure cheaply purchased at any price. What cared I if I had waded to the portal of this wonder through another's blood. I would have given my own to enjoy one such moment of intoxication and delight.

Breathless with gazing on this lovely wonder, and forgetful for an instant of everything save her presence, I withdrew my eye from the microscope eagerly. Alas! as my gaze fell on the thin slide that lay beneath my instrument, the bright light from mirror and from prism sparkled on a colourless drop of water! There, in that tiny bead of dew, this beautiful being was for ever imprisoned. The planet Neptune was not more distant from me than she. I hastened once more to apply my eye to the microscope.

Animula (let me now call her by that dear name which I subsequently bestowed on her) had changed her position. She had again approached the wondrous forest, and was gazing earnestly upward. Presently one of the trees—as I must call them—unfolded a long ciliary process, with which it seized one of the gleaming fruits that glittered on its summit, and sweeping slowly down, held it within reach of Animula. The sylph took it in her delicate hand and began to eat. My attention was so entirely absorbed by her that I could not apply myself to the task of determining whether this singular plant was or was not instinct with volition.

I watched her, as she made her repast, with the most profound attention. The suppleness of her motions sent a thrill of delight through my frame; my heart beat madly as she turned her beautiful eyes in the direction of the spot in which I stood. What would I not have given to have had the power to precipitate myself into that luminous ocean and float with her through those groves of purple and gold! While I was thus breathlessly following her every movement, she suddenly started, seemed to listen for a moment, and then cleaving the brilliant ether in which she was floating, like a flash of light, pierced through the opaline forest and disappeared.

Instantly a series of the most singular sensations attacked me. It seemed as if I had suddenly gone blind. The luminous sphere was still before me, but my daylight had vanished. What caused this sudden disappearance? Had she a lover or a husband? Yes, that was the solution! Some signal from a happy fellow-being had vibrated through the avenues of the forest, and she had obeyed the summons.

The agony of my sensations, as I arrived at this conclusion, startled me. I tried to reject the conviction that my reason forced upon me. I battled against the fatal conclusion—but in vain. It was so. I had no escape from it. I loved an animalcule.

It is true that, thanks to the marvellous power of my microscope, she appeared of human proportions. Instead of presenting the revolting aspect of the coarser creatures, that live and struggle and die, in the more easily resolvable portions of the water-drop, she was fair and delicate and of surpassing beauty. But of what account was all that? Every time that my eye was withdrawn from the instrument it fell on a miserable drop of water, within which, I must be content to know, dwelt all that could make my life lovely.

Could she but see me once! Could I for one moment pierce the mystical walls that so inexorably rose to separate us, and whisper all that filled my soul, I might consent to be satisfied for the rest of my life with the knowledge of her remote sympathy. It would be something to have established even the faintest personal link to bind us together—to know that at times, when roaming through these enchanted glades, she might think of the wonderful stranger who had broken the monotony of her life with his presence and left a gentle memory in her heart!

But it could not be. No invention of which human intellect was capable could break down the barriers that nature had erected. I might feast my soul upon her wondrous beauty, yet she must always remain ignorant of the adoring eyes that day and night gazed upon her, and, even when closed, beheld her in dreams. With a bitter cry of anguish I fled from the room, and, flinging myself on my bed, sobbed myself to sleep like a child.

VI

I arose the next morning almost at daybreak, and rushed to my microscope. I trembled as I sought the luminous world in miniature that contained my all. Animula was there. I had left the gas-lamp, surrounded by its moderators, burning when I went to bed the night before. I found the sylph bathing, as it were, with an expression of pleasure animating her features, in the brilliant light which surrounded her. She tossed her lustrous golden hair over her shoulders with innocent coquetry. She lay at full length in the transparent medium, in which she supported herself with ease, and gambolled with the enchanting grace that the nymph Salmacis might have exhibited when she sought to conquer the modest Hermaphroditus. I tried an experiment to satisfy myself if her powers of reflection were developed. I lessened the lamplight considerably. By the dim light that remained I could see an expression of pain flit across her face. She looked upward suddenly, and her brows contracted. I flooded the stage of the microscope again with a full stream of light, and her whole expression changed. She sprang forward like some substance deprived of all weight.

Her eyes sparkled and her lips moved. Ah! if science had only the means of conducting and reduplicating sounds, as it does rays of light, what carols of happiness would then have entranced my ears! what jubilant hymns to Adonais would have thrilled the illumined air!

I now comprehended how it was that the Count de Cabalis peopled his mystic world with sylphs—beautiful beings whose breath of life was lambent fire, and who sported for ever in regions of purest ether and purest light. The Rosicrucian had anticipated the wonder that I had practically realised.

How long this worship of my strange divinity went on thus I scarcely know. I lost all note of time. All day from early dawn, and far into the night, I was to be found peering through that wonderful lens. I saw no one, went nowhere, and scarce allowed myself sufficient time for my meals. My whole life was absorbed in contemplation as rapt as that of any of the Romish saints. Every hour that I gazed upon the divine form strengthened my passion—a passion that was always overshadowed by the maddening conviction that, although I could gaze on her at will, she never, never could behold me!

At length I grew so pale and emaciated, from want of rest and continual brooding over my insane love and its cruel conditions, that I determined to make some effort to wean myself from it. "Come," I said, "this is at best but a fantasy. Your imagination has bestowed on Animula charms which in reality she does not possess. Seclusion from female society has produced this morbid condition of mind. Compare her with the beautiful women of your own world, and this false enchantment will vanish."

I looked over the newspapers by chance. There I beheld the advertisement of a celebrated *danseuse* who appeared nightly at Niblo's. The Signorina Caradolce had the reputation of being the most beautiful as well as the most graceful woman in the world. I instantly dressed and went to the theatre.

The curtain drew up. The usual semicircle of fairies in white muslin were standing on the right toe around the enamelled flower-bank of green canvas, on which the belated prince was sleeping. Suddenly a flute is heard. The fairies start. The trees open, the fairies all stand on the left toe, and the queen enters. It was the Signorina. She bounded forward amid thunders of applause, and, lighting on one foot, remained poised in the air. Heavens! was this the great enchantress that had drawn monarchs at her chariot-wheels? Those heavy, muscular limbs, those thick ankles, those cavernous eyes, that stereotyped smile, those crudely painted cheeks! Where were the vermeil blooms, the liquid, expressive eyes, the harmonious limbs of Animula?

The Signorina danced. What gross, discordant movements! The play of her limbs was all false and artificial. Her bounds were painful

athletic efforts; her poses were angular and distressed the eye. I could bear it no longer; with an exclamation of disgust that drew every eye upon me, I rose from my seat in the very middle of the Signorina's *pas de fascination* and abruptly quitted the house.

I hastened home to feast my eyes once more on the lovely form of my sylph. I felt that henceforth to combat this passion would be impossible. I applied my eyes to the lens. Animula was there—but what could have happened? Some terrible change seemed to have taken place during my absence. Some secret grief seemed to cloud the lovely features of her I gazed upon. Her face had grown thin and haggard; her limbs trailed heavily; the wondrous lustre of her golden hair had faded. She was ill—ill, and I could not assist her! I believe at that moment I would have forfeited all claims to my human birthright if I could only have been dwarfed to the size of an animalcule, and permitted to console her from whom fate had for ever divided me.

I racked my brain for the solution of this mystery. What was it that afflicted the sylph? She seemed to suffer intense pain. Her features contracted, and she even writhed, as if with some internal agony. The wondrous forests appeared also to have lost half their beauty. Their hues were dim and in some places faded away altogether. I watched Animula for hours with a breaking heart, and she seemed absolutely to wither away under my very eye. Suddenly I remembered that I had not looked at the water-drop for several days. In fact, I hated to see it; for it reminded me of the natural barrier between Animula and myself. I hurriedly looked down on the stage of the microscope. The slide was still there—but, great heavens, the water-drop had vanished! The awful truth burst upon me; it had evaporated, until it had become so minute as to be invisible to the naked eye; I had been gazing on its last atom, the one that contained Animula—and she was dying!

I rushed again to the front of the lens and looked through. Alas! the last agony had seized her. The rainbow-hued forests had all melted away, and Animula lay struggling feebly in what seemed to be a spot of dim light. Ah! the sight was horrible: the limbs once so round and lovely shrivelling up into nothing; the eyes—those eyes that shone like heaven—being quenched into black dust; the lustrous golden hair now lank and discoloured. The last throe came. I beheld that final struggle of the blackening form—and I fainted.

When I awoke out of a trance of many hours, I found myself lying amid the wreck of my instrument, myself as shattered in mind and body as it. I crawled feebly to my bed, from which I did not rise for many months.

They say now that I am mad; but they are mistaken. I am poor, for I have neither the heart nor the will to work; all my money is spent, and I live on charity. Young men's associations that love a

joke invite me to lecture on optics before them, for which they pay me, and laugh at me while I lecture. "Linley, the mad microscopist," is the name I go by. I suppose that I talk incoherently while I lecture. Who could talk sense when his brain is haunted by such ghastly memories, while ever and anon among the shapes of death I behold the radiant form of my lost Animula!

NOAH BROOKS
1830–1903

LOST IN THE FOG

"Down with your helm! you'll have us hard and fast aground!"

My acquaintance with Captain Booden was at that time somewhat limited, and if possible I knew less of the difficult and narrow exit from Bolinas Bay than I did of Captain Booden. So with great trepidation I jammed the helm hard down, and the obedient little *Lively Polly* fell off easily, and we were over the bar and gliding gently along under the steep bluff of the Mesa, whose rocky edge, rising sheer from the beach and crowned with dry grass, rose far above the pennon of the little schooner. I did not intend to deceive Captain Booden, but being anxious to work my way down to San Francisco, I had shipped as "able seaman" on the *Lively Polly*, though it was a long day since I had handled a foresheet or anything bigger than the little plungers which hover about Bolinas Bay, and latterly I had been ranching it at Point Reyes, so what could I know about the bar and the shoals of the harbour, I would like to know? We had glided out of the narrow channel which is skirted on one side by a long sandspit that curves around and makes the southern and western shelter of the bay, and on the other side by a huge elevated tongue of tableland, called by the inhabitants thereabouts the Mesa. High, precipitous, perpendicular, level, and dotted with farmhouses, this singular bit of land stretches several miles out southward to sea, bordered with a rocky beach, and tapered off into the wide ocean with Duxbury Ree—a dangerous rocky reef, curving down to the southward and almost always white with foam, save when the sea is calm, and then the great lazy green waves eddy noiselessly over the half-hidden rocks, or slip like oil over the dreadful dangers which they hide.

Behind us was the lovely bay of Bolinas, blue and sparkling in the summer afternoon sun, its borders dotted with thrifty ranches, and the woody ravines and bristling Tamalpais Range rising over all. The tide was running out, and only a peaceful swash whispered along the level sandy beach on our left, where the busy sandpiper chased the playful wave as it softly rose and fell along the shore. On the higher centre of the sandspit which shuts in the bay on that side, a row of ashy-coloured gulls sunned themselves, and blinked

at us sleepily as we drifted slowly out of the channel, our breeze cut off by the Mesa that hemmed us in on the right. I have told you that I did not much pretend to seamanship, but I was not sorry that I had taken passage on the *Lively Polly*. for there is always something novel and fascinating to me in coasting a region which I have heretofore known only by its hills, cañons, and sea-beaches. The trip is usually made from Bolinas Bay to San Francisco in five or six hours, when wind and tide favour ; and I could bear being knocked about by Captain Booden for that length of time, especially as there was one other hand on board—" Lanky " he was called—but whether a foremast hand or landsman I do not know. He had been teaching school at Jaybird Cañon, and was a little more awkward with the running rigging of the *Lively Polly* than I was. Captain Booden was, therefore, the main reliance of the little twenty-ton schooner, and if her deck-load of firewood and cargo of butter and eggs ever reached a market, the skilful and profane skipper should have all the credit thereof.

The wind died away, and the sea, before ruffled with a wholesale breeze, grew as calm as a sheet of billowy glass, heaving only in long, gentle undulations on which the sinking sun bestowed a green and golden glory, dimmed only by the white fog-bank that came drifting slowly up from the Farralones, now shut out from view by the lovely haze. Captain Booden gazed morosely on the western horizon, and swore by a big round oath that we should not have a capful of wind if that fog-bank did not lift. But we were fairly out of the bay ; the Mesa was lessening in the distance, and as we drifted slowly southward the red-roofed buildings on its level rim grew to look like toy-houses, and we heard the dull moan of the ebb-tide on Duxbury Reef on our starboard bow. The sea grew dead calm and the wind fell quite away, but still we drifted southward, passing Rocky Point and peering curiously into Pilot Boat Cove, which looked so strangely unfamiliar to me from the sea, though I had fished in its trout-brooks many a day, and had hauled driftwood from the rocky beach to Johnson's ranch in times gone by. The tide turned after sundown, and Captain Booden thought we ought to get a bit of wind then ; but it did not come, and the fog crept up and up the glassy sea, rolling in huge wreaths of mist, shutting out the surface of the water, and finally the grey rocks of North Heads were hidden, and little by little the shore was curtained from our view and we were becalmed in the fog.

To say that the skipper swore would hardly describe his case. He cursed his luck, his stars, his foretop, his main hatch, his blasted foolishness, his lubberly crew—Lanky and I—and a variety of other persons and things ; but all to no avail. Night came on, and the light on North Heads gleamed at us with a sickly eye through the deepening fog. We had a bit of luncheon with us, but no fire, and were fain to content ourselves with cold meat, bread, and water,

hoping that a warm breakfast in San Francisco would make some amends for our present short rations. But the night wore on, and we were still tumbling about in the rising sea without wind enough to fill our sails, a rayless sky overhead, and with breakers continually under our lee. Once we saw lights on shore, and heard the sullen thud of rollers that smote against the rocks; it was aggravating, as the fog lifted for a space, to see the cheerful windows of the Cliff House, and almost hear the merry calls of pleasure-seekers as they muffled themselves in their wraps and drove gaily up the hill, reckless of the poor homeless mariners who were drifting comfortlessly about so near the shore they could not reach. We got out the sweeps and rowed lustily for several hours, steering by the compass and taking our bearings from the cliff.

But we lost our bearings in the maze of currents in which we soon found ourselves, and the dim shore melted away in the thickening fog. To add to our difficulties, Captain Booden put his head most frequently into the cuddy; and when it emerged, he smelt dreadfully of gin. Lanky and I held a secret council, in which we agreed, in case he became intoxicated, we would rise up in mutiny and work the vessel on our own account. He shortly "lost his head," as Lanky phrased it; and slipping down on the deck, went quietly into the sleep of the gin-drunken. At four o'clock in the morning the grey fog grew greyer with the early dawning; and as I gazed with weary eyes into the vague unknown that shut us in, Booden roused him from his booze, and seizing the tiller from my hand, bawled: "'Bout ship, you swab! we're on the Farralones!" And sure enough, there loomed right under our starboard quarter a group of conical rocks, steeply rising from the restless blue sea. Their wild white sides were crowded with chattering sea-fowl; and far above, like a faint nimbus in the sky, shone the feeble rays of the lighthouse lantern, now almost quenched by the dull gleam of day that crept up from the water. The helm was jammed hard down. There was no time to get out sweeps; but still drifting helplessly, we barely grazed the bare rocks of the islet, and swung clear, slinking once more into the gloom.

Our scanty stock of provisions and water was gone; but there was no danger of starvation, for the generous product of the henneries and dairies of Bolinas filled the vessel's hold—albeit raw eggs and butter without bread might only serve as a barrier against famine. So we drifted and tumbled about—still no wind and no sign of the lifting of the fog. Once in a while it would roll upward and show a long, flat expanse of water, tempting us to believe that the blessed sky was coming out at last; but soon the veil fell again, and we aimlessly wondered where we were and whither we were drifting. There is something awful and mysterious in the shadowy nothingness that surrounds one in a fog at sea. You fancy that out of that impenetrable mist may suddenly burst some great disaster or danger.

Strange shapes appear to be forming themselves in the obscurity out of which they emerge, and the eye is wearied beyond expression with looking into a vacuity which continually promises to evolve into something, but never does.

Thus idly drifting, we heard, first, the creaking of a block, then a faint wash of sea ; and out of the white depths of the fog came the bulky hull of a full-rigged ship. Her sails were set, but she made scarcely steerage way. Her rusty sides and general look bespoke a long voyage just concluding ; and we found on hailing her that she was the British ship *Marathon*, from Calcutta for San Francisco. We boarded the *Marathon*, though almost in sight of our own port, with something of the feeling that shipwrecked seamen may have when they reach land. It was odd that we, lost and wandering as we were, should be thus encountered in the vast unknown where we were drifting by a strange ship ; and though scarcely two hours' sail from home, should be supplied with bread and water by a Britisher from the Indies. We gave them all the information we had about the pilots, whom we wanted so much to meet ourselves ; and after following slowly for a few hours by the huge side of our strange friend, parted company—the black hull and huge spars of the Indiaman gradually lessening in the mist that shut her from our view. We had touched a chord that bound us to our fellow-men, but it was drawn from our hands, and the unfathomable abyss in which we floated had swallowed up each human trace, except what was comprised on the contracted deck of the *Lively Polly*, where Captain Booden sat glumly whittling, and Lanky meditatively peered after the disappeared *Marathon*, as though his soul and all his hopes had gone with her. The deck, with its load of cord-wood ; the sails and rigging ; the sliding-hutch of the little cuddy ; and all the features of the *Lively Polly*, but yesterday so unfamiliar were now as odiously wearisome as though I had known them for a century. It seemed as if I had never known any other place.

All that day we floated aimlessly along, moved only by the sluggish currents, which shifted occasionally, but generally bore us westward and southward ; not a breath of wind arose, and our sails were as useless as though we had been on dry land. Night came on again, and found us still entirely without reckoning and as completely " at sea " as ever before. To add to our discomfort, a drizzling rain, unusual for the season of the year, set in, and we cowered on the wet deck-load, more than ever disgusted with each other and the world. During the night a big ocean steamer came plunging and crashing through the darkness, her lights gleaming redly through the dense medium as she cautiously felt her way past us, falling off a few points as she heard our hail. We lay right in her path, but with tin horns and a wild Indian yell from the versatile Lanky managed to make ourselves heard, and the

mysterious stranger disappeared in the fog as suddenly as she had come, and we were once more alone in the darkness.

The night wore slowly away, and we made out to catch a few hours' sleep, standing " watch and watch " with each other of our slender crew. Day dawned again, and we broke our fast with the last of the *Marathon's* biscuit, having " broken cargo " to eke out our cold repast with some of the Bolinas butter and eggs which we were taking to a most unexpected market.

Suddenly, about six o'clock in the morning, we heard the sound of breakers ahead, and above the sullen roar of the surf I distinctly heard the tinklings of a bell. We got out our sweeps and had commenced to row wearily once more when the fog lifted and before us lay the blessed land. A high range of sparsely wooded hills, crowned with rocky ledges, and with abrupt slopes covered with dry brown grass, running to the water's edge, formed the background of the picture. Nearer, a tongue of high land, brushy and rocky, made out from the main shore, and, curving southward, formed a shelter to what seemed a harbour within. Against the precipitous point the sea broke with a heavy blow, and a few ugly peaks of rock lifted their heads above the heaving green of the sea. High up above the sky-line rose one tall sharp, blue peak, yet veiled in the floating mist, but its base melted away into a mass of verdure that stretched from the shore far up the mountain-side. Our sweeps were now used to bring us around the point, and cautiously pulling in, we opened a lovely bay bordered with orchards and vineyards, in the midst of which was a neat village, glittering white in the sunshine, and clustered around an old-fashioned mission church, whose quaint gable and tower reminded us of the buildings of the early Spanish settlers of the country. As we neared the shore (there was no landing-place) we could see an unwonted commotion in the clean streets, and a flag was run up to the top of a white staff that stood in the midst of a plaza. Captain Booden returned the compliment by hoisting the Stars and Stripes at our mainmast head, but was sorely bothered with the mingled dyes of the flag on shore. A puff of air blew out it folds, and to our surprise disclosed the Mexican national standard.

" Blast them greasers," said the patriotic skipper, " if they ain't gone and histed a Mexican cactus flag, then I'm blowed." He seriously thought of hauling down his beloved national colours again, resenting the insult of hoisting a foreign flag on American soil. He pocketed the affront, however, remarking that " they probably knew that a Bolinas butter-boat was not much of a fightist anyway."

We dropped anchor gladly, Captain Booden being wholly at a loss as to our whereabouts. We judged that we were somewhere south of the Golden Gate, but what town this was that slept so tranquilly in the summer sun, and what hills were these that

walled in the peaceful scene from the rest of the world, we could not tell. The village seemed awakening from its serene sleepiness, and one by one the windows of the adobe cottages swung open as if the people rubbed their long-closed eyes at some unwonted sight; and the doors gradually opened as though their dumb lips would hail us and ask who were these strangers that vexed the quiet waters of their bay. But two small fishing-boats lay at anchor, and these Booden said reminded him of Christopher Columbus or Noah's Ark, they were so clumsy and antique in build.

We hauled our boat up alongside, and all hands got in and went ashore. As we landed, a little shudder seemed to go through the sleepy old place, as if it had been rudely disturbed from its comfortable nap, and a sudden sob of sea air swept through the quiet streets as though the insensate houses had actually breathed the weary sigh of awaking. The buildings were low and white, with dark-skinned children basking in the doors, and grass hammocks swinging beneath open verandahs. There were no stores, no sign of business, and no sound of vehicles or labour; all was as decorous and quiet, to use the skipper's description, "as if the people had slicked up their door-yards, whitewashed their houses, and gone to bed." It was just like a New England Sabbath in a Mexican village.

And this fancy was further coloured by a strange procession which now met us as we went up from the narrow beach, having first made fast our boat. A lean Mexican priest, with an enormous shovel hat and particularly shabby cassock, came towards us, followed by a motley crowd of Mexicans, prominent among whom was a pompous old man clad in a seedy Mexican uniform and wearing a trailing rapier at his side. The rest of the procession was brought up with a crowd of shy women, dark-eyed and tawny and all poorly clad, though otherwise comfortable enough in condition. These hung back and wonderingly looked at the strange faces, as though they had never seen the like before. The old padre lifted his skinny hands, and said something in Spanish which I did not understand.

"Why, the old mummy is slinging his popish blessings at us!" This was Lanky's interpretation of the kindly priest's paternal salutation. And, sure enough, he was welcoming us to the shore of San Ildefonso with holy fervour and religious phrase.

"I say," said Booden, a little testily, "what did you say was the name of this place, and where away does it lay from 'Frisco?" In very choice Castilian, as Lanky declared, the priest rejoined that he did not understand the language in which Booden was speaking. "Then bring on somebody that does," rejoined that irreverent mariner, when due interpretation had been made. The padre protested that no one in the village understood the English tongue. The skipper gave a long low whistle of suppressed astonish-

ment, and wondered if we had drifted to Lower California in two days and nights, and had struck a Mexican settlement. The colours on the flagstaff and the absence of any Americans gave some show of reason to this startling conclusion; and Lanky, who was now the interpreter of the party, asked the name of the place, and was again told that it was San Ildefonso; but when he asked what country it was in and how far it was to San Francisco, he was met with a polite "I do not understand you, Señor." Here was a puzzle: becalmed in a strange port only two days' drift from the city of San Francisco; a town which the schoolmaster declared was not laid down on any map; a population that spoke only Spanish and did not know English when they heard it; a Mexican flag flying over the town, and an educated priest who did not know what we meant when we asked how far it was to San Francisco. Were we bewitched?

Accepting a hospitable invitation from the padre, we sauntered up to the plaza, where we were ushered into a long, low room, which might once have been a military barrack-room. It was neatly whitewashed and had a hard clay floor, and along the walls were a few ancient firelocks and a venerable picture of "His Excellency, General Santa Aña, President of the Republic of Mexico," as a legend beneath it set forth. Breakfast of chickens, vegetables, bread, and an excellent sort of country wine (this last being served in a big earthen bottle) was served up to us on the long unpainted table that stood in the middle of the room. During the repast our host, the priest, sat with folded hands intently regarding us, while the rest of the people clustered around the door and open windows, eyeing us with indescribable and incomprehensible curiosity. If we had been visitors from the moon we could not have attracted more attention. Even the stolid Indians, a few of whom strolled lazily about, came and gazed at us until the pompous old man in faded Mexican uniform drove them noisily away from the window, where they shut out the light and the pleasant morning air, perfumed with heliotropes, verbenas, and sweet herbs that grew luxuriantly about the houses.

The padre had restrained his curiosity out of rigid politeness until we had eaten, when he began by asking, "Did our galleon come from Manila?" We told him that we only came from Bolinas; whereat he said once more, with a puzzled look of pain, "I do not understand you, Señor." Then pointing through the open doorway to where the *Lively Polly* peacefully floated at anchor, he asked what ensign was that which floated at her masthead. Lanky proudly, but with some astonishment, replied: "That's the American flag, Señor." At this the seedy old man in uniform eagerly said: "Americanos! Americanos! why, I saw some of those people and that flag at Monterey." Lanky asked him if Monterey was not full of Americans, and did not have plenty of

flags. The Ancient replied that he did not know; it was a long time since he had been there. Lanky observed that perhaps he had never been there. "I was there in 1835," said the Ancient. This curious speech being interpreted to Captain Booden, that worthy remarked that he did not believe that he had seen a white man since.

After an ineffectual effort to explain to the company where Bolinas was, we rose and went out for a view of the town. It was beautifully situated on a gentle rise which swelled up from the water's edge and fell rapidly off in the rear of the town into a deep ravine, where a brawling mountain stream supplied a little flouring-mill with motive power. Beyond the ravine were small fields of grain, beans and lentils on the rolling slopes, and back of these rose the dark, dense vegetation of low hills, while over all were the rough and ragged ridges of mountains closing in all the scene. The town itself, as I have said, was white and clean; the houses were low-browed, with windows secured by wooden shutters, only a few glazed sashes being seen anywhere. Out of these openings in the thick adobe walls of the humble homes of the villagers flashed the curious, the abashed glances of many a dark-eyed senorita, who fled, laughing, as we approached. The old church was on the plaza, and in its odd-shaped turret tinkled the little bell whose notes had sounded the morning angelus when we were knocking about in the fog outside. High up on its quaintly arched gable was inscribed in antique letters "1796." In reply to a sceptical remark from Lanky, Booden declared that "the old shell looked as though it might have been built in the time of Ferdinand and Isabella, for that matter." The worthy skipper had a misty idea that all old Spanish buildings were built in the days of these famous sovereigns.

Hearing the names of Ferdinand and Isabella, the padre gravely and reverentially asked: "And is the health of His Excellency, General Santa Aña, whom God protect, still continued to him?" With great amazement, Lanky replied: "Santa Aña! why, the last heard of him was that he was keeping a cockpit in Havana; some of the newspapers published an obituary of him about six months ago, but I believe he is alive yet somewhere."

A little flush of indignation mantled the old man's cheek, and with a tinge of severity in his voice he said: "I have heard that shameful scandal about our noble President once before, but you must excuse me if I ask you not to repeat it. It is true he took away our Pious Fund some years since, but he is still our revered President, and I would not hear him ill-spoken of any more than our puissant and mighty Ferdinand, of whom you just spoke—may he rest in glory!" and here the good priest crossed himself devoutly.

"What is the old priest jabbering about?" asked Captain

Booden impatiently; for he was in haste to "get his bearings" and be off. When Lanky replied, he burst out: "Tell him that Santa Aña is not President of Mexico any more than I am, and that he hasn't amounted to a row of pins since California was part of the United States."

Lanky faithfully interpreted this fling at the ex-President, whereupon the padre, motioning to the Ancient to put up his rapier, which had leaped out of its rusty scabbard, said: "Nay, Señor, you would insult an old man. We have never been told yet by our government that the Province of California was alienated from the great Republic of Mexico, and we owe allegiance to none save the nation whose flag we love so well"; and the old man turned his tear-dimmed eyes toward the ragged standard of Mexico that drooped from the staff in the plaza. Continuing, he said: "Our noble country has strangely forgotten us, and though we watch the harbour entrance year after year, no tidings ever come. The galleon that was to bring us stores has never been seen on the horizon yet, and we seem lost in the fog."

The schoolmaster of Jaybird Cañon managed to tell us what the priest had said, and then asked when he had last heard of the outside world. "It was in 1837," said he sadly, "when we sent a courier to the Mission del Carmelo, at Monterey, for tidings from New Spain. He never came back, and the great earthquake which shook the country hereabout opened a huge chasm across the country just back of the Sierra yonder, and none dared to cross over to the mainland. The saints have defended us in peace, and it is the will of Heaven that we shall stay here by ourselves until the Holy Virgin, in answer to our prayers, shall send us deliverance."

Here was a new revelation. This was an old Spanish Catholic mission, settled in 1796, called San Ildefonso, which had evidently been overlooked for nearly forty years, and had quietly slept in an unknown solitude while the country had been transferred to the United States from the flag that still idly waved over it. Lost in the fog! Here was a whole town lost in a fog of years. Empires and dynasties had risen and fallen; the world had repeatedly been shaken to its centre, and this people had heeded it not; a great civil war had ravaged the country to which they now belonged, and they knew not of it; poor Mexico herself had been torn with dissensions and had been insulted with an empire, and these peaceful and weary watchers for tidings from "New Spain" had recked nothing of all these things. All around them the busy State of California was scarred with the eager pick of gold-seekers or the shining share of the husbandman; towns and cities had sprung up where these patriarchs had only known of vast cattle ranges or sleepy missions of the Roman Catholic Fathers. They knew nothing of the great city of San Francisco, with its busy marts and crowded harbour; and thought of its broad bay—if

they thought of it at all—as the lovely shore of Yerba Buena, bounded by bleak hills and almost unvexed by any keel. The political storms of forty years had gone hurtless over their heads, and in a certain sort of dreamless sleep San Ildefonso had still remained true to the red, white, and green flag that had long since disappeared from every part of the State save here, where it was still loved and revered as the banner of the soil.

The social and political framework of the town had been kept up through all these years. There had been no connection with the fountain of political power, but the town was ruled by the legally elected Ayuntamiento, or Common Council, of which the Ancient, Señor Apolonario Maldonado, was President or Alcade. They were daily looking for advices from Don José Castro, Governor of the loyal province of California; and so they had been looking daily for forty years. We asked if they had not heard from any of the prying Yankees who crowd the country. Father Ignacio—for that was the padre's name—replied: "Yes; five years ago, when the winter rains had just set in, a tall, spare man, who talked some French and some Spanish came down over the mountains with a pack containing pocket-knives, razors, soap, perfumery, laces, and other curious wares, and besought our people to purchase. We have not much coin, but were disposed to treat him Christianly, until he did declare that President General Santa Aña, whom may the saints defend! was a thief and gambler, and had gambled away the Province of California to the United States; whereupon we drave him hence, the Ayuntamiento sending a trusty guard to see him two leagues from the borders of the Pueblo. But months after we discovered his pack and such of his poor bones as the wild beasts of prey had not carried off at the base of a precipice where he had fallen. His few remains and his goods were together buried on the mountain-side, and I lamented that we had been so hard with him. But the saints forbid that he should go back and tell where the people of San Ildefonso were waiting to hear from their own neglectful country, which may Heaven defend, bless, and prosper."

The little town took on a new interest to us cold outsiders after hearing its strange and almost improbable story. We could have scarcely believed that San Ildefonso had actually been overlooked in the transfer of the country from Mexico to the United States, and had for nearly forty years been hidden away between the Sierra and the sea; but if we were disposed to doubt the word of the good father, here was intrinsic evidence of the truth of his narrative. There were no Americans here: only the remnants of the old Mexican occupation and the civilised Indians. No traces of later civilisation could be found; but the simple dresses, tools, implements of husbandry, and household utensils were such as I have seen in the half-civilised wilds of Central America. The old mill

in the cañon behind the town was a curiosity of clumsiness, and nine-tenths of the water-power of the arroya that supplied it were wasted. Besides, until now, who ever heard of such a town in California as San Ildefonso? Upon what map can any such headland and bay be traced? and where are the historic records of the pueblo whose well-defined boundaries lay palpably before us? I have dwelt upon this point, about which I naturally have some feeling, because of the sceptical criticism which my narrative has since provoked. There are some people in the world who never will believe anything that they have not seen, touched, or tasted for themselves; California has her share of such.

Captain Booden was disposed to reject Father Ignacio's story, until I called his attention to the fact that this was a tolerable harbour for small craft, and yet had never before been heard of; that he never knew of such a town, and that if any of his numerous associates in the marine profession knew of the town or harbour of San Ildefonso, he surely would have heard of it from them. He restrained his impatience to be off long enough to allow Father Ignacio to gather from us a few chapters of the world's history for forty years past. The discovery of gold in California, the settlement of the country and the Pacific Railroad were not so much account to him, somehow, as the condition of Europe, the Church of Mexico, and what had become of the Pious Fund; this last I discovered had been a worrisome subject to the good Father. I did not know what it was myself, but I believe it was the alienation from the Church of certain moneys and incomes which were transferred to speculators by the Mexican Congress years and years ago.

I was glad to find that we were more readily believed by Father Ignacio and the old Don than our Yankee predecessor had been; perhaps we were believed more on his corroborative evidence. The priest, however, politely declined to believe all we said—that was evident; and the Don steadily refused to believe that California had been transferred to the United States. It was a little touching to see Father Ignacio's doubt and hopes struggle in his withered face as he heard in a few brief sentences the history of his beloved land and Church for forty years past. His eye kindled or it was bedewed with tears as he listened, and an occasional flash of resentment flushed his cheek when he heard something that shook his ancient faith in the established order of things. To a proposition to take a passage with us to San Francisco, he replied warmly that he would on no account leave his flock, nor attempt to thwart the manifest will of Heaven that the town should remain unheard of until delivered from its long sleep by the same agencies that had cut it off from the rest of the world. Neither would he allow any of the people to come with us.

And so we parted. We went out with the turn of the tide, Father Ignacio and the Ancient accompanying us to the beach, followed by

a crowd of the townsfolk, who carried for us water and provisions for a longer voyage than ours promised to be. The venerable priest raised his hands in parting blessing as we shoved off, and I saw two big tears roll down the furrowed face of Señor Maldonado, who looked after us as a stalwart old warrior might look at the departure of a band of hopeful comrades leaving him to fret in monkish solitude while they were off to the wars again. Wind and tide served, and in a few minutes the *Lively Polly* rounded the point, and looking back, I saw the yellow haze of the afternoon sun sifted sleepily over all the place ; the knots of white-clad people standing statuesque and motionless as they gazed ; the flag of Mexico faintly waving in the air ; and with a sigh of relief a slumbrous veil seemed to fall over all the scene ; and as our boat met the roll of the current outside the headland, the grey rocks of the point shut out the fading view, and we saw the last of San Ildefonso.

Captain Booden had gathered enough from the people to know that we were somewhere south of San Francisco (the *Lively Polly* had no chart or nautical instrument on board of course), and so he determined to coast cautiously along northward, marking the shore line in order to be able to guide other navigators to the harbour. But a light mist crept down the coast, shutting out the view of the headlands, and by midnight we had stretched out to sea again, and we were once more out of our reckoning. At daybreak, however, the fog lifted, and we found ourselves in sight of land, and a brisk breeze blowing, we soon made Pigeon Point, and before noon were inside the Golden Gate, and ended our long and adventurous cruise from Bolinas Bay by hauling into the wharf of San Francisco.

I have little left to tell. Of the shameful way in which our report was received, every newspaper reader knows. At first there were some persons, men of science and reading, who were disposed to believe what we said. I printed in one of the daily newspapers an account of what we had discovered, giving a full history of San Ildefonso as Father Ignacio had given it to us. Of course, as I find is usual in such cases, the other newspapers pooh-poohed the story their contemporary had published to their exclusion, and made themselves very merry over what they were pleased to term "The Great San Ildefonso Sell." I prevailed on Captain Booden to make a short voyage down the coast in search of the lost port. But we never saw the headland, the ridge beyond the town, nor anything that looked like these landmarks, though we went down as far as San Pedro Bay and back twice or three times. It actually did seem that the whole locality had been swallowed up, or had vanished into air. In vain did I bring the matter to the notice of the merchants and scientific men of San Francisco. Nobody would fit out an exploring expedition by land or sea ; those who listened at first finally inquired "if there was any money in it ?" I could not give an affirmative answer, and they turned away with

the discouraging remark that the California Academy of Natural Science and the Society of Pioneers were the only bodies interested in the fate of our lost city. Even Captain Booden somehow lost all interest in the enterprise, and returned to his Bolinas coasting with the most stolid indifference. I combated the attacks of the newspaper with facts and depositions of my fellow-voyagers as long as I could, until one day the editor of the *Daily Trumpeter* (I suppress the real name of the sheet) coldly told me that the public were tired of the story of San Ildefonso. It was plain that his mind had been soured by the sarcasms of his contemporaries, and he no longer believed in me.

The newspaper controversy died away and was forgotten, but I have never relinquished the hope of proving the verity of my statements. At one time I expected to establish the truth, having heard that one Zedekiah Murch had known a Yankee peddler who had gone over the mountains of Santa Cruz and never was heard of more. But Zedekiah's memory was feeble, and he only knew that such a story prevailed long ago ; so that clue was soon lost again, and the little fire of enthusiasm which it had kindled among a few persons died out. I have not yet lost all hope ; and when I think of the regretful conviction that will force itself upon the mind of good Father Ignacio, that we were, after all, impostors, I cannot bear to reflect that I may die and visit the lost town of San Ildefonso no more.

SAMUEL DAVIS

circa 1830

THE FIRST PIANO IN CAMP

In 1858—it might have been five years earlier or later ; this is not the history for the public schools—there was a little camp about ten miles from Pioche, occupied by upward of three hundred miners, every one of whom might have packed his prospecting implements and left for more inviting fields any time before sunset.

When the day was over, these men did not rest from their labours, like honest New England agriculturists, but sang, danced, gambled, and shot each other, as the mood seized them.

One evening the report spread along the main street (which was the only street) that three men had been killed at Silver Reef and that the bodies were coming in. Presently a lumbering old conveyance laboured up the hill, drawn by a couple of horses, well worn out with their pull. The cart contained a good-sized box, and no sooner did its outlines become visible, through the glimmer of a stray light, than it began to affect the idlers.

Death always enforces respect, and even though no one had caught sight of the remains, the crowd gradually became subdued, and when the horses came to a standstill the cart was immediately surrounded. The driver, however, was not in the least impressed with the solemnity of his commission.

" All there ? " asked one.

" Haven't examined. Guess so."

The driver filled his pipe, and lit it as he continued :

" Wish the bones and load had gone over the grade ! "

A man who had been looking on stepped up to the man at once.

" I don't know who you have in that box, but if they happen to be any friends of mine I'll lay you alongside."

" We can mighty soon see," said the teamster coolly. " Just burst the lid off, and if they happen to be the men you want, I'm here."

The two looked at each other for a moment, and then the crowd gathered a little closer, anticipating trouble.

" I believe that dead men are entitled to good treatment, and when you talk about hoping to see corpses go over a bank, all I

have to say is, that it will be better for you if the late lamented ain't my friends."

"We'll open the box. I don't take back what I've said, and if my language don't suit your ways of thinking, I guess I can stand it."

With these words the teamster began to pry up the lid. He got a board off, and then pulled out some rags. A strip of something dark, like rosewood, presented itself.

"Eastern coffins, by thunder!" said several, and the crowd looked quite astonished.

Some more boards flew up, and the man who was ready to defend his friend's memory shifted his weapon a little. The cool manner of the teamster had so irritated him that he had made up his mind to pull his weapon at the first sight of the dead, even if the deceased was his worst and oldest enemy, Presently the whole of the box-cover was off, and the teamster, clearing away the packing revealed to the astonished group the top of something which puzzled all alike.

"Boys," said he, "this is a pianner."

A general shout of laughter went up, and the man who had been so anxious to enforce respect for the dead muttered something about feeling dry, and the keeper of the nearest bar was several ounces better off by the time the boys had given the joke all the attention it called for.

Had a dozen dead men been in the box their presence in the camp could not have occasioned half the excitement that the arrival of that lonely piano caused. But the next morning it was known that the instrument was to grace a hurdy-gurdy saloon, owned by Tom Goskin, the leading gambler in the place. It took nearly a week to get this wonder on its legs, and the owner was the proudest individual in the State. It rose gradually from a recumbent to an upright position amid a confusion of tongues, after the manner of the Tower of Babel.

Of course everybody knew just how such an instrument should be put up. One knew where the "off hind leg" should go, and another was posted on the "front piece."

Scores of men came to the place every day to assist.

"I'll put the bones in good order."

"If you want the wires tuned up, I'm the boy."

"I've got music to feed it for a month."

Another brought a pair of blankets for a cover, and all took the liveliest interest in it. It was at last in a condition for business.

"It's been showin' its teeth all the week. We'd like to have it spit out something."

Alas! there wasn't a man to be found who could play upon the instrument. Goskin began to realise that he had a losing speculation on his hands. He had a fiddler, and a Mexican who thrummed a guitar. A pianist would have made his orchestra complete. One

day a three-card monte player told a friend confidentially that he could "knock any amount of music out of the piano, if he only had it alone a few hours to get his hand in." This report spread about the camp, but on being questioned he vowed that he didn't know a note of music. It was noted, however, as a suspicious circumstance, that he often hung about the instrument and looked upon it longingly, like a hungry man gloating over a beef-steak in a restaurant window. There was no doubt but that this man had music in his soul, perhaps in his finger-ends, but did not dare to make trial of his strength after the rules of harmony had suffered so many years of neglect. So the fiddler kept on with his jigs, and the greasy Mexican pawed his discordant guitar, but no man had the nerve to touch the piano. There were doubtless scores of men in the camp who would have given ten ounces of gold-dust to have been half-an-hour alone with it, but every man's nerve shrank from the jeers which the crowd would shower upon him should his first attempt prove a failure. It got to be generally understood that the hand which first essayed to draw music from the keys must not slouch its work.

. . . . . .

It was Christmas eve, and Goskin, according to his custom, had decorated his gambling-hell with sprigs of mountain cedar and a shrub whose crimson berries did not seem a bad imitation of English holly. The piano was covered with evergreens, and all that was wanting to completely fill the cup of Goskin's contentment was a man to play the instrument.

"Christmas night, and no piano-pounder," he said. "This is a nice country for a Christian to live in."

Getting a piece of paper, he scrawled the words:

. . . . . .
. $20 REWARD .
. TO A COMPETENT PIANO PLAYER .
. . . . . .

This he stuck up on the music-rack, and, though the inscription glared at the frequenters of the room until midnight, it failed to draw any musician from his shell.

So the merrymaking went on; the hilarity grew apace. Men danced and sang to the music of the squeaky fiddle and worn-out guitar as the jolly crowd within tried to drown the howling of the storm without. Suddenly they became aware of the presence of a white-haired man, crouching near the fireplace. His garments—such as were left—were wet with melting snow, and he had a half-starved, half-crazed expression. He held his thin, trembling hands toward the fire, and the light of the blazing wood made them almost transparent. He looked about him once in a while as if in search

of something, and his presence cast such a chill over the place that gradually the sound of the revelry was hushed, and it seemed that this waif of the storm had brought in with it all the gloom and coldness of the warring elements. Goskin, mixing up a cup of hot egg-nog, advanced and remarked cheerily :

" Here, stranger, brace up ! This is the real stuff."

The man drained the cup, smacked his lips, and seemed more at home.

" Been prospecting, eh ? Out in the mountains—caught in the storm ? Lively night, this ! "

" Pretty bad," said the man.

" Must feel pretty dry ? "

The man looked at his streaming clothes and laughed, as if Goskin's remark was a sarcasm.

" How long out ? "

" Four days."

" Hungry ? "

The man rose up, and, walking over to the lunch-counter, fell to work upon some roast bear, devouring it like any wild animal would have done. As meat and drink and warmth began to permeate the stranger, he seemed to expand and lighten up. His features lost their pallor, and he grew more and more content with the idea that he was not in the grave. As he underwent these changes, the people about him got merrier and happier, and threw off the temporary feeling of depression which he had laid upon them.

" Do you always have your place decorated like this ? " he finally asked of Goskin.

" This is Christmas Eve," was the reply.

The stranger was startled.

" December 24th, sure enough."

" That's the way I put it up, pard."

" When I was in England I always kept Christmas. But I had forgotten that this was the night. I've been wandering about in the mountains until I've lost track of the feasts of the Church."

Presently his eye fell upon the piano.

" Where's the player ? " he asked.

" Never had any," said Goskin, blushing at the expression.

" I used to play when I was young."

Goskin almost fainted at the admission.

" Stranger, do tackle it, and give us a tune ! Nary man in this camp ever had the nerve to wrestle with that music-box." His pulse beat faster, for he feared that the man would refuse.

" I'll do the best I can," he said.

There was no stool, but seizing a candle-box, he drew it up and seated himself before the instrument. It only required a few seconds for a hush to come over the room.

" That old coon is going to give the thing a rattle."

The sight of a man at the piano was something so unusual that even the faro-dealer, who was about to take in a fifty-dollar bet on the tray, paused and did not reach for the money. Men stopped drinking, with the glasses at their lips. Conversation appeared to have been struck with a sort of paralysis, and cards were no longer shuffled.

The old man brushed back his long white locks, looked up to the ceiling, half closed his eyes, and in a mystic sort of reverie passed his fingers over the keys. He touched but a single note, yet the sound thrilled the room. It was the key to his improvisation, and as he wove his chords together the music laid its spell upon every ear and heart. He felt his way along the keys like a man treading uncertain paths, but he gained confidence as he progressed, and presently bent to his work like a master. The instrument was not in exact tune, but the ears of his audience did not detect anything radically wrong. They heard a succession of grand chords, a suggestion of paradise, melodies here and there, and it was enough.

" See him counter with his left ! " said an old rough enraptured.

" He calls the turn every time on the upper end of the board," responded a man with a stack of chips in his hand.

The player wandered off into the old ballads they had heard at home. All the sad and melancholy and touching songs, that came up like dreams of childhood, this unknown player drew from the keys. His hands kneaded their hearts like dough and squeezed out tears as from a wet sponge.

As the strains flowed one upon the other, the listeners saw their homes of the long-ago reared again ; they were playing once more where the apple-blossoms sank through the soft air to join the violets on the green turf of the old New England States ; they saw the glories of the Wisconsin maples and the haze of the Indian summer blending their hues together ; they recalled the heather of Scottish hills, the white cliffs of Britain, and heard the sullen roar of the sea, as it beat upon their memories, vaguely. Then came all the old Christmas carols, such as they had sung in church thirty years before ; the subtle music that brings up the glimmer of wax tapers, the solemn shrines, the evergreen, holly, mistletoe, and surpliced choirs. Then the remorseless performer planted his final stab in every heart with " Home, Sweet Home."

When the player ceased the crowd slunk away from him. There was no more revelry and devilment left in his audience. Each man wanted to sneak off to his cabin and write the old folks a letter. The day was breaking as the last man left the place, and the player, with his head on the piano, fell asleep.

" I say, pard," said Goskin, " don't you want a little rest ? "

" I feel tired," the old man said. " Perhaps you'll let me rest here for the matter of a day or so."

He walked behind the bar, where some old blankets were lying, and stretched himself upon them.

"I feel pretty sick. I guess I won't last long. I've got a brother down in the ravine—his name's Driscoll. He don't know I'm here. Can you get him before morning? I'd like to see his face once before I die."

Goskin started up at the mention of the name. He knew Driscoll well.

"He your brother? I'll have him here in half an hour."

As Goskin dashed out into the storm the musician pressed his hand to his side and groaned. Goskin heard the word "Hurry!" and sped down the ravine to Driscoll's cabin. It was quite light in the room when the two men returned. Driscoll was pale as death.

"My God! I hope he's alive! I wronged him when we lived in England twenty years ago."

They saw the old man had drawn the blankets over his face. The two stood a moment, awed by the thought that he might be dead. Goskin lifted the blanket and pulled it down, astonished. There was no one there!

"Gone!" cried Driscoll wildly.

"Gone!" echoed Goskin, pulling out his cash-drawer. "Ten thousand dollars in the sack, and the Lord knows how much loose change in the drawer!"

The next day the boys got out, followed a horse's track through the snow, and lost them in the trail leading toward Pioche.

There was a man missing from the camp. It was the three-card monte man, who used to deny point-blank that he could play the scale. One day they found a wig of white hair, and called to mind when the "stranger" had pushed those locks back when he looked toward the ceiling for inspiration on the night of December 24, 1858.

REBECCA HARDING DAVIS

1831–1910

BALACCHI BROTHERS

"THERE's a man, now, that has been famous in his time," said Davidge as we passed the mill, glancing in at the sunny gap in the side of the building.

I paused incredulously: Phil's lion so often turned out to be Snug the joiner. Phil was my chum at college, and in inviting me home to spend the vacation with him I thought he had fancied the resources of his village larger than they proved. In the two days since we came we had examined the old doctor's cabinet, listened superciliously to a debate in the literary club upon the Evils of the Stage, and passed two solid afternoons in the circle about the stove in the drug-shop, where the squire and the Methodist parson, and even the mild, white-cravated young rector of St. Mark's, were wont to sharpen their wits by friction. What more was left? I was positive that I knew the mental gauge of every man in the village.

A little earlier or later in life a gun or fishing-rod would have satisfied me. The sleepy, sunny little market-town was shut in by the bronzed autumn meadows, that sent their long groping fingers of grass or parti-coloured weeds drowsily up into the very streets: there were ranges of hills and heavy stretches of oak and beech woods, too, through which crept glittering creeks full of trout. But I was just at that age when the soul disdains all aimless pleasures: my game was Man. I was busy in philosophically testing, weighing, labelling human nature.

"Famous, eh?" I said, looking after the pursy figure of the miller, in his floury canvas roundabout and corduroy trousers, trotting up and down among the bags.

"That is one of the Balacchi Brothers," Phil answered as we walked on. "You've heard of them when you were a boy?"

I had heard of them. The great acrobats were as noted in their line of art as Ellsler and Jenny Lind in theirs. But acrobats and danseuses had been alike brilliant, wicked impossibilities to my youth, for I had been reared a Covenanter of the Covenanters. In spite of the doubting philosophies with which I had clothed myself at

college, that old Presbyterian training clung to me in everyday life close as my skin.

After that day I loitered about the mill, watching this man whose life had been spent in one godless theatre after another, very much as the Florentine peasants looked after Dante when they knew he had come back from hell. I was on the look-out for the taint, the abnormal signs, of vice. It was about that time that I was fevered with the missionary enthusiasm, and in Polynesia, where I meant to go (but where I never did go), I declared to Phil daily that I should find in every cannibal the half-effaced image of God, only waiting to be quickened into grace and virtue. That was quite conceivable. But that a flashy, God-defying actor could be the same man at heart as this fat, good-tempered, gossiping miller, who jogged to the butcher's every morning for his wife, a basket on one arm and a baby on the other, was not conceivable. He was a close dealer at the butcher's, too, though dribbling gossip there as everywhere ; a regular attendant at St. Mark's, with his sandy-headed flock about him, among whom he slept comfortably enough, it is true, but with as pious dispositions as the rest of us.

I remember how I watched this man, week in and week out. It was a trivial matter, but it irritated me unendurably to find that this circus-rider had human blood precisely like my own : it outraged my early religion.

We talk a great deal of the rose-coloured illusions in which youth wraps the world, and the agony it suffers as they are stripped from its bare, hard face. But the fact is, that youth (aside from its narrow, passionate friendships) is usually apt to be acrid and watery and sour in its judgment and creeds—it has the quality of any other unripe fruit : it is middle age that is just and tolerant, that has found room enough in the world for itself and all human flies to buzz out their lives good-humouredly together. It is youth who can see a tangible devil at work in every party or sect opposed to its own, whose enemy is always a villain, and who finds treachery and falsehood in the friend who is occasionally bored or indifferent : it is middle age that has discovered the reasonable sweet *juste milieu* of human nature—who knows few saints perhaps, but is apt to find its friend and grocer and shoemaker agreeable and honest fellows. It is these vehement illusions, these inherited bigotries and prejudices, that tear and cripple a young man as they are taken from him one by one. He creeps out of them as a crab from the shell that has grown too small for him, but he thinks he has left his identity behind him.

It was such a reason as this that made me follow the miller assiduously, and cultivate a quasi intimacy with him, in the course of which I picked the following story from him. It was told at divers times, and with many interruptions and questions from me. But for obvious reasons I have made it continuous. It had its meaning

to me, coarse and common though it was—the same which Christ taught in the divine beauty of His parables. Whether that meaning might not be found in the history of every human life, if we had eyes to read it, is matter for question.

Balacchi Brothers? And you've heard of them, eh? Well, well! (with a pleased nod, rubbing his hands on his knees.) Yes, sir. Fifteen years ago they were known as The Admirable Crichtons of the Ring. It was George who got up that name: I did not see the force of it. But no name could claim too much for us. Why, I could show you notices in the newspapers that—— I used to clip them out and stuff my pocket-book with them as we went along, but after I quit the business I pasted them in an old ledger, and I often now read them of nights. No doubt I lost a good many too.

Yes, sir: I was one of Balacchi Brothers. My name *is* Zack Loper. And it was then, of course.

You think we would have plenty of adventures? Well, no—not a great many. There's a good deal of monotony in the business. Towns seem always pretty much alike to me. And there was such a deal of rehearsing to be done by day and at night. I looked at nothing but the rope and George: the audience was nothing but a packed flat surface of upturned, staring eyes and half-open mouths. It was an odd sight, yes, when you come to think of it. I never was one for adventures. I was mostly set upon shaving close through the week, so that when Saturday night came I'd have something to lay by: I had this mill in my mind, you see. I was married, and had my wife and a baby that I'd never seen waiting for me at home. I was brought up to milling, but the trapeze paid better. I took to it naturally, as one might say.

But George!—he had adventures every week. And as for acquaintances! Why, before we'd be in a town two days he'd be hail-fellow-well-met with half the people in it. That fellow could scent a dance or a joke half-a-mile off. You never see such wide-awake men nowadays. People seem to me half dead or asleep when I think of him.

Oh, I thought you knew. My partner Balacchi. It was Balacchi on the bills: the actors called him Signor, and people like the manager, South, and we, who knew him well, George. I asked him his real name once or twice, but he joked it off. "How many names must a man be saddled with?" he said. I don't know it to this day, nor who he had been. They hinted there was something queer about his story, but I'll go my bail it was a clean one, whatever it was.

You never heard how "Balacchi Brothers" broke up? That was as near to an adventure as I ever had. Come over to this bench and I'll tell it to you. You don't dislike the dust of the mill? The sun's pleasanter on this side.

It was early in August of '56 when George and I came to an old town on the Ohio, half city, half village, to play an engagement. We were under contract with South then, who provided the rest of the troupe, three or four posture-girls, Stradi, the pianist, and a Madame Somebody, who gave readings and sang. "Concert" was the heading in large caps on the Bills, "Balacchi Brothers will give their aesthetic *tableaux vivants* in the interludes," in agate below.

"I've got to cover you fellows over with respectability here," South said. "Rope-dancing won't go down with these aristocratic church-goers."

I remember how George was irritated. "When I was my own agent," he said, "I only went to the cities. Educated people can appreciate what we do, but in these country towns we rank with circus-riders."

George had some queer notions about his business. He followed it for sheer love of it, as I did for money. I've seen all the great athletes since, but I never saw one with his wonderful skill and strength, and with the grace of a woman too, or a deer. Now that takes hard, steady work, but he never flinched from it as I did; and when night came, and the people and lights, and I thought of nothing but to get through, I used to think he had the pride of a thousand women in every one of his muscles and nerves: a little applause would fill him with a mad kind of fury of delight and triumph. South had a story that Geroge belonged to some old Knickerbocker family, and had run off from home years ago. I don't know. There was that wild restless blood in him that no home could have kept him.

We were to stay so long in this town that I found rooms for us with an old couple named Peters, who had but lately moved in from the country, and had half-a-dozen carpenters and masons boarding with them. It was cheaper than the hotel, and George preferred that kind of people to educated men, which made me doubt that story of his having been a gentleman. The old woman Peters was uneasy about taking us, and spoke out quite freely about it when we called, not knowing that George and I were Balacchi Brothers ourselves.

"The house has been respectable so far, gentlemen," she said. "I don't know what about taking in them half-naked, drunken play-actors. What do you say, Susy?" to her grand-daughter.

"Wait till you see them, grandmother," the girl said gently. "I should think that men whose lives depended every night on their steady eyes and nerves would not dare to touch liquor."

"You are quite right—nor even tobacco," said George. It was such a prompt, sensible thing for the little girl to say that he looked at her attentively a minute, and then went up to the old lady, smiling: "We don't look like drinking men, do we, madam?"

"No, no, sir. I did not know that you were the I-talians." She was quite flustered and frightened, and said cordially enough how glad she was to have us both. But it was George she shook hands with. There was something clean and strong and inspiring about that man that made most women friendly to him on sight.

Why, in two days you'd have thought he'd never had another home than the Peter's. He helped the old man milk, and had tinkered up the broken kitchen-table, and put in half-a-dozen window-panes, and was intimate with all the boarders; could give the masons the prices of job-work at the East, and put Stoll, the carpenter, on the idea of contract-houses, out of which he afterward made a fortune. It was nothing but jokes and fun and shouts of laughter when he was in the house: even the old man brightened up and told some capital stories. But from the first I noticed that George's eye followed Susy watchfully wherever she went, though he was as distant and respectful with her as he was with most women. He had a curious kind of respect for women, George had. Even the Slingsbys, that all the men in the theatre joked with, he used to pass by as though they were logs leaning against the wall. They were the posture-girls, and anything worse besides the name *I* never saw.

There was a thing happened once on that point which I often thought might have given me a clue to his history if I'd followed it up. We were playing in one of the best theatres in New York (they brought us into some opera), and the boxes were filled with fine ladies beautifully dressed, or, I might say, half dressed.

George was in one of the wings. "It's a pretty sight," I said to him.

"It's a shameful sight!" he said with an oath. "The Slingsbys do it for their living, but these women——"

I said they were ladies, and ought to be treated with respect. I was amazed at the heat he was in.

"I had a sister, Zack, and there's where I learned what a woman should be."

"I never heard of your sister, George," said I. I knew he would not have spoken of her but for the heat he was in.

"No. I'm as dead to her, being what I am, as if I were six feet under ground."

I turned and looked at him, and when I saw his face I said no more, and I never spoke of it again. It was something neither I nor any other man had any business with.

So when I saw how he was touched by Susy and drawn toward her, it raised her in my opinion, though I'd seen myself how pretty and sensible a little body she was. But I was sorry, for I knew 'twan't no use. The Peters were Methodists, and Susy more strict than any of them; and I saw she looked on the theatre as the gate of hell, and George and me swinging over it.

I don't think, though, that George saw how strong her feeling about it was, for after we'd been there a week or two he began to ask her to go and see us perform, if only for once. I believe he thought the girl would come to love him if she saw him at his best. I don't wonder at it, sir. I've seen those pictures and statues they've made of the old gods, and I reckon they put in them the best they thought a man could be; but I never knew what real manhood was until I saw my partner when he stood quiet on the stage waiting the signal to begin, the light full on his keen blue eyes, the gold-worked velvet tunic and his perfect figure.

He looked more like other men in his ordinary clothing. George liked a bit of flash, too, in his dress—a red necktie or gold chain stretched over his waistcoat.

Susy refused at first, steadily. At last, however, came our final night, when George was to produce his great leaping feat, never yet performed in public. We had been practising it for months, and South judged it best to try it first before a small, quiet audience, for the risk was horrible. Whether because it was to be the last night, and her kind heart disliked to hurt him by refusal, or whether she loved him better than either she or he knew, I could not tell, but I saw she was strongly tempted to go. She was an innocent little thing, and not used to hide what she felt. Her eyes were red that morning, as though she had been crying all the night. Perhaps, because I was a married man, and quieter than George, she acted more freely with me than him.

"I wish I knew what to do," she said, looking up to me with her eyes full of tears. There was nobody in the room but her grandmother.

"I couldn't advise you, Miss Susy," says I. "Your church discipline goes against our trade, I know."

"I know what's right myself: I don't need church discipline to teach me," she said sharply.

"I think I'd go, Susy," said her grandmother. "It is a concert, after all: it's not a play."

"The name don't alter it."

Seeing the temper she was in, I thought it best to say no more, but the old lady added, "It's Mr. George's last night. Dear, dear! how I'll miss him!"

Susy turned quickly to the window. "Why does he follow such godless ways then?" she cried. She stood still a good while, and when she turned about her pale little face made my heart ache. "I'll take home Mrs. Tyson's dress now, grandmother," she said, and went out of the room. I forgot to tell you Susy was a seamstress. Well, the bundle was large, and I offered to carry it for her, as the time for rehearsal did not come till noon. She crept alongside of me without a word, looking weak and done-out: she was always so busy and bright, it was the more noticeable. The house where the

dress was to go was one of the largest in the town. The servant showed us into a back parlour, and took the dress up to her mistress. I looked around me a good deal, for I'd never been in such a house before; but very soon I caught sight of a lady who made me forget carpets and pictures. I only saw her in the mirror, for she was standing by the fireplace in the front room. The door was open between. It wasn't that she was especially pretty, but in her white morning-dress, with the lace about her throat and her hair drawn back from her face, I thought she was the delicatest, softest, finest thing of man or woman kind I ever saw.

"Look there, Susy! look there!" I whispered.

"It is a Mrs. Lloyd from New York. She is here on a visit. That is her husband"; and then she went down into her own gloomy thoughts again.

The husband was a grave, middle-aged man. He had had his paper up before his face, so that I had not seen him before.

"You will go for the tickets, then, Edward?" she said.

"If you make a point of it, yes," in an annoyed tone. "But I don't know why you make a point of it. The musical part of the performance is beneath contempt, I understand, and the real attraction is the exhibition of these mountebanks of trapezists, which will be simply disgusting to you. You would not encourage such people at home: why would you do it here?"

"They are not necessarily wicked." I noticed there was a curious unsteadiness in her voice, as though she was hurt and agitated. I thought perhaps she knew I was there.

"There is very little hope of any redeeming qualities in men who make a trade of twisting their bodies like apes," he said. "Contortionists and ballet-dancers and clowns and harlequins——" he rattled all the names over with a good deal of uncalled-for sharpness, I thought, calling them "dissolute and degraded, the very offal of humanity." I could not understand his heat until he added, "I never could comprehend your interest and sympathy for that especial class, Ellinor."

"No, you could not, Edward," she said quietly. "But I have it. I have never seen an exhibition of the kind. But I want to see this to-night, if you will gratify me. I have no reason," she added when he looked at her curiously. "The desire is unaccountable to myself."

The straightforward look of her blue eyes as she met his seemed strangely familiar and friendly to me.

At that moment Susy stood up to go. Her cheeks were burning and her eyes sparkling. "Dissolute and degraded!" she said again and again when we were outside. But I took no notice.

As we reached the house she stopped me when I turned off to go to

rehearsal. "You'll get seats for grandmother and me, Mr. Balacchi?" she said.

"You're going, then, Susy?"

"Yes, I'm going."

Now the house in which we performed was a queer structure. A stock company, thinking there was a field for a theatre in the town, had taken a four-storey building, gutted the interior, and fitted it up with tiers of seats and scenery. The stock company was starved out, however, and left the town, and the theatre was used as a gymnasium, a concert-room or a church by turns. Its peculiarity was, that it was both exceedingly lofty and narrow, which suited our purpose exactly.

It was packed that night from dome to pit. George and I had rehearsed our new act both morning and afternoon, South watching us without intermission. South was terribly nervous and anxious, half disposed, at the last minute, to forbid it, although it had been announced on the bills for a week. But a feat which is successful in an empty house, with but one spectator, when your nerves are quiet and blood cool, is a different thing before an excited, terrified, noisy audience, your whole body at fever heat. However, George was cool as a cucumber, indeed almost indifferent about the act, but in a mad boyish glee all day about everything else. I suppose the reason was that Susy was going.

South had lighted the house brilliantly and brought in a band. And all classes of people poured into the theatre until it could hold no more. I saw Mrs. Peters in one of the side-seats, with Susy's blushing, frightened little face beside her. George, standing back among the scenes, saw her too: I think, indeed, it was all he did see.

There were the usual readings from Shakespeare at first.

While Madame was on, South came to us. "Boys," said he, "let this matter go over a few weeks. A little more practice will do you no harm. You can substitute some other trick, and these people will be none the wiser."

George shrugged his shoulders impatiently: "Nonsense! When did you grow so chicken-hearted, South? It is I who have to run the risk, I fancy."

I suppose South's uneasiness had infected me. "I am quite willing to put it off," I said. I had felt gloomy and superstitious all day. But I never ventured to oppose George more decidedly than that.

He only laughed by way of reply, and went off to dress. South looked after him, I remember, saying what a magnificently built fellow he was. If we could only have seen the end of that night's work!

As I went to my dressing-room I saw Mrs. Lloyd and her husband

in one of the stage-boxes, with one or two other ladies and gentlemen. She was plainly and darkly dressed, but to my mind she looked like a princess among them all. I could not but wonder what interest she could have in such a rough set as we, although her husband, I confess, did judge us hardly.

After the readings came the concert part of the performance, and then what South chose to call the Moving Tableaux, which was really nothing in the world but ballet-dancing. George and I were left to crown the whole. I had some ordinary trapeze-work to do at first, but George was reserved for the new feat in order that his nerves might be perfectly unshaken. When I went out alone and bowed to the audience, I observed that Mrs. Lloyd was leaning eagerly forward, but at the first glance at my face she sank back with a look of relief, and turned away, that she might not see my exploits. It nettled me a little, I think, yet they were worth watching.

Well I finished, and then there was a song to give me time to cool. I went to the side-scenes, where I could be alone for that five minutes. I had no risk to run in the grand feat, you see, but I had George's life in my hands. I haven't told you yet—have I ?—what it was he proposed to do.

A rope was suspended from the centre of the dome, the lower end of which I held, standing in the highest gallery opposite the stage. Above the stage hung the trapeze on which George and the two posture-girls were to be. At a certain signal I was to let the rope go, and George, springing from the trapeze across the full width of the dome, was to catch it in mid-air, a hundred feet above the heads of the people. You understand ? The mistake of an instant of time on either his part or mine, and death was almost certain. The plan we had thought surest was for South to give the word, and then that both should count—One, Two, Three ! At Three the rope fell and he leaped. We had practised so often that we thought we counted as one man.

When the song was over the men hung the rope and the trapeze. Jenny and Lou Slingsby swung themselves up to it, turned a few somersaults, and then were quiet. They were only meant to give effect to the scene in their gauzy dresses and spangles. Then South came forward and told the audience what we meant to do. It was a feat, he said, which had never been produced before in any theatre, and in which failure was death. No one but that most daring of all acrobats, Balacchi, would attempt it. Now, I knew South so well that I saw under all his confident, bragging tone he was more anxious and doubtful than he had ever been. He hesitated a moment, and then requested that after we took our places the audience should preserve absolute silence, and refrain from even the slightest movements until the feat was over. The merest trifle might distract the attention of the performers and render their eyes and hold unsteady, he said. He left the stage, and the music began.

I went round to take my place in the gallery. George had not yet left his room. As I passed I tapped at the door and called, " Good luck, old fellow ! "

" That's certain now, Zack," he answered with a joyous laugh. He was so exultant, you see, that Susy had come.

But the shadow of death seemed to have crept over me. When I took my stand in the lofty gallery, and looked down at the brilliant lights and the great mass of people, who followed my every motion as one man, and the two glittering, half-naked girls swinging in the distance, and heard the music rolling up thunders of sound, it was all ghastly and horrible to me, sir. Some men have such presentiments, they say : I never had before or since. South remained on the stage perfectly motionless, in order, I think, to maintain his control over the andience.

The trumpets sounded a call, and in the middle of a burst of triumphant music George came on the stage. There was a deafening outbreak of applause, and then a dead silence, but I think every man and woman felt a thrill of admiration of the noble figure. Poor George ! the new, tight-fitting dress of purple velvet that he had bought for this night set off his white skin, and his fine head was bare, with no covering but the short curls that Susy liked.

It was for Susy ! He gave one quick glance up at her, and a bright, boyish smile, as if telling her not to be afraid, which all the audience understood, and answered by an ivoluntary, long-drawn breath. I looked at Susy. The girl's colourless face was turned to George, and her hands were clasped as though she saw him already dead before her ; but she could be trusted I saw. *She* would utter no sound. I had only time to glance at her, and then turned to my work. George and I dared not take our eyes from each other.

There was a single bugle note, and then George swung himself up to the trapeze. The silence was like death as he steadied himself and slowly turned so as to front me. As he turned he faced the stage-box for the first time. He had reached the level of the posture-girls, who fluttered on either side, and stood on the swaying rod poised on one foot, his arms folded, when in the breathless stillness there came a sudden cry and the words, " Oh, Charley ! Charley ! "

Even at the distance where I stood I saw George start and a shiver pass over his body. He looked wildly about him.

" To me ! to me ! " I shouted.

He fixed his eye on mine and steadied himself. There was a terrible silent excitement in the people, in the very air.

There was the mistake. We should have stopped then, shaken as he was, but South, bewildered and terrified, lost control of himself : he gave the word.

I held the rope loose—held George with my eyes—One !

I saw his lips move : he was counting with me.

Two !

His eye wandered, turned to the stage-box.

Three!

Like a flash I saw the white upturned faces below me, the posture-girls' gestures of horror, the dark springing figure through the air, that wavered—and fell a shapeless mass on the floor.

There was a moment of deathlike silence, and then a wild outcry —women fainting, men cursing and crying out in that senseless, helpless way they have when there is sudden danger. By the time I had reached the floor they had straightened out his shattered limbs, and two or three doctors were fighting their way through the great crowd that was surging about him.

Well, sir, at that minute what did I hear but George's voice above all the rest, choked and hollow as it was, like a man calling out of the grave: "The women! Good God! don't you see the women?" he gasped.

Looking up then, I saw those miserable Slingsbys hanging on to the trapeze for life. What with the scare and shock, they'd lost what little sense they had, and there they hung helpless as limp rags high over our heads.

"Damn the Slingsbys!" said I. God forgive me! But I saw this battered wreck at my feet that had been George. Nobody seemed to have any mind left. Even South stared stupidly up at them and then back at George. The doctors were making ready to lift him, and half of the crowd were gaping in horror, and the rest yelling for ladders or ropes, and scrambling over each other, and there hung the poor flimsy wretches, their eyes starting out of their heads from horror, and their lean fingers losing their hold every minute. But, sir—I couldn't help it—I turned from them to watch George as the doctors lifted him.

"It's hardly worth while," whispered one.

But they raised him and, sir—the body went one way and the legs another.

I thought he was dead. I couldn't see that he breathed, when he opened his eyes and looked up for the slingsbys. "Put me down," he said, and the doctors obeyed him. There was that in his voice that they had to obey him, though it wasn't but a whisper.

"Ladders are of no use," he said. "Loper!"

"Yes, George."

"You can swing yourself up. Do it."

I went. I remember the queer stunned feeling I had: my joints moved like a machine.

When I reached the trapeze, he said, as cool as if he was calling the figures for a Virginia reel, "Support them, you—Loper. Now lower the trapeze, men—carefully!"

It was the only way their lives could be saved, and he was the only man to see it. He watched us until the girls touched the floor more dead than alive, and then his head fell back and the life seemed to go

suddenly out of him like the flame out of a candle, leaving only the dead wick.

As they were carrying him out I noticed for the first time that a woman was holding his hand. It was that frail little wisp of a Susy, that used to blush and tremble if you spoke to her suddenly, and here she was quite quiet and steady in the midst of this great crowd.

"His sister, I suppose?" one of the doctors said to her.

"No, sir. If he lives I will be his wife." The old gentleman was very respectful to her after that I noticed.

Now the rest of my story is very muddled, you'll say, and confused. But the truth is, I don't understand it myself. I ran on ahead to Mrs. Peter's to prepare his bed for him, but they did not bring him to Peter's. After I waited an hour or two, I found George had been taken to the principal hotel in the place, and a bedroom and every comfort that money could buy were there for him. Susy came home sobbing late in the night, but she told me nothing, except that those who had a right to have charge of him had taken him. I found afterward the poor girl was driven from the door of his room, where she was waiting like a faithful dog. I went myself but I fared no better. What with surgeons and professional nurses, and the gentlemen that crowded about with their solemn looks of authority, I dared not ask to see him. Yet I believe still George would rather have had old Loper by him in his extremity than any of them. Once, when the door was opened, I thought I saw Mrs. Lloyd stooping over the bed between the lace curtains, and just then her husband came out talking to one of the surgeons.

He said: "It is certain there were here the finest elements of manhood. And I will do my part to rescue him from the abyss into which he has fallen."

"Will you tell me how George is, sir?" I asked, pushing up. "Balacchi? My partner?"

Mr. Lloyd turned away directly, but the surgeon told me civilly enough that if George's life could be saved, it must be with the loss of one or perhaps both of his legs.

"He'll never mount a trapeze again, then," I said, and I suppose I groaned; for to think of George helpless——

"God forbid!" cried Mr. Lloyd sharply. "Now look here my good man: you can be of no possible use to Mr.—Balacchi, as you call him. He is in the hands of his own people, and he will feel, as they do, that the kindest thing you can do is to let him alone."

There was nothing to be done after that but to touch my hat and go out, but as I went I heard him talking of "inexplicable madness and years of wasted opportunities."

Well, sir, I never went again: the words hurt like the cut of a whip, though 'twan't George that spoke them. But I quit business and hung around the town till I heard he was going to live, and I

broke up my contract with South. I never went on a trapeze again. I felt as if the infernal thing was always dripping with his blood after that day. Anyhow, all the heart went out of the business for me with George. So I came back here and settled down to the milling, and by degrees I learned to think of George as a rich and fortunate man.

I've nearly done now—only a word or two more. About six years afterward there was a circus came to town, and I took the wife and children and went. I always did when I had the chance. It was the old Adam in me yet, likely.

Well, sir, among the attractions of the circus was the great and unrivalled Hercules, who could play with cannon-balls as other men would with dice. I don't know what made me restless and excited when I read about this man. It seemed as though the old spirit was coming back to me again. I could hardly keep still when the time drew near for him to appear. I don't know what I expected. But when he came out from behind the curtain I shouted out like a mad man, "Balacchi! George! George!"

He stopped short, looked about, and catching sight of me tossed up his cap with his old boyish shout: then he remembered himself, and went on with his performance.

He was lame—yes, in one leg. The other was gone altogether. He walked on crutches. Whether the strength had gone into his chest and arms, I don't know; but there he stood tossing about the cannon-balls as I might marbles. So full of hearty good-humour too, joking with his audience, and so delighted when they gave him a round of applause.

After the performance I hurried around the tent, and you may be sure there was rejoicing that made the manager and other fellows laugh.

George haled me off with him down the street. He cleared the ground with that crutch and wooden leg like a steam-engine. "Come! come along!" he cried: "I've something to show you, Loper."

He took me to a quiet boarding-house, and there, in a cosy room was Susy with a four-year-old girl.

"We were married as soon as I could hobble about," he said, "and she goes with me and makes a home wherever I am."

Susy nodded and blushed and laughed. "Baby and I," she said. "Do you see Baby? She has her father's eyes, do you see?"

"She *is* her mother, Loper," said George—"just as innocent and pure and foolish—just as sure of the Father in heaven taking care of her. They've made a different man of me in some ways—a different man," bending his head reverently.

After a while I began, "You did not stay with——?"

But Balacchi frowned. "I knew where *I* belonged," he said.

Well, he's young yet. He's the best Hercules in the profession, and has laid up a snug sum. Why don't he invest it and retire ? I doubt if he'll ever do that, sir. He may do it, but I doubt it. He can't change his blood, and there's that in Balacchi that makes me suspect he will die with the velvet and gilt on and in the height of good-humour and fun with his audience.

FRANK R. STOCKTON

1834–1902

MR. TOLMAN

Mr. Tolman was a gentleman whose apparent age was of a varying character. At times, when deep in thought on business matters or other affairs, one might have thought him fifty-five or fifty-seven, or even sixty. Ordinarily, however, when things were running along in a satisfactory and commonplace way, he appeared to be about fifty years old, while upon some extraordinary occasions, when the world assumed an unusually attractive aspect, his age seemed to run down to forty-five or less.

He was the head of a business firm; in fact he was the only member of it. The firm was known as Pusey and Co.; but Pusey had long been dead, and the "Co.," of which Mr. Tolman had been a member, was dissolved. Our elderly hero having bought out the business, firm name and all, for many years had carried it on with success and profit. His counting-house was a small and quiet place, but a great deal of money had been made in it. Mr. Tolman was rich—very rich indeed.

And yet as he sat in his counting-room one winter evening he looked his oldest. He had on his hat and his overcoat, his gloves and his fur collar. Every one else in the establishment had gone home; and he, with the keys in his hand, was ready to lock up and leave also. He often stayed later than any one else, and left the keys with Mr. Canterfield, the head clerk, as he passed his house on his way home.

Mr. Tolman seemed in no hurry to go. He simply sat and thought, and increased his apparent age. The truth was he did not want to go home. He was tired of going home. This was not because his home was not a pleasant one. No single gentleman in the city had a handsomer or more comfortable suite of rooms. It was not because he felt lonely, or regretted that a wife and children did not brighten and enliven his home. He was perfectly satisfied to be a bachelor. The conditions suited him exactly. But, in spite of all this, he was tired of going home.

"I wish," said Mr. Tolman to himself, "that I could feel some interest in going home"; and then he rose and took a turn or two up and down the room; but as that did not seem to give him any

more interest in the matter, he sat down again. "I wish it were necessary for me to go home," said he; "but it isn't"; and then he fell again to thinking. "What I need," he said after a while, "is to depend more upon myself—to feel that I am necessary to myself. Just now I'm not. I'll stop going home—at least in this way. Where's the sense in envying other men when I can have all that they have just as well as not? And I'll have it too," said Mr. Tolman as he went out and locked the doors. Once in the streets, and walking rapidly, his ideas shaped themselves easily and readily into a plan which, by the time he reached the house of his head clerk, was quite matured. Mr. Canterfield was just going down to dinner as his employer rang the bell, so he opened the door himself. "I will detain you but a minute or two." said Mr. Tolman, handing the keys to Mr. Canterfield. "Shall we step into the parlour?"

When his employer had gone, and Mr. Canterfield had joined his family at the dinner-table, his wife immediately asked him what Mr. Tolman wanted.

"Only to say that he is going away to-morrow, and that I am to attend to the business, and send his personal letters to——," naming a city not a hundred miles away.

"How long is he going to stay?"

"He didn't say," answered Mr. Canterfield.

"I'll tell you what he ought to do," said the lady. "He ought to make you a partner in the firm, and then he could go away and stay as long as he pleased."

"He can do that now," returned her husband. "He has made a good many trips since I have been with him, and things have gone on very much in the same way as when he was here. He knows that."

"But still you'd like to be a partner?"

"Oh yes," said Mr. Canterfield.

"And common gratitude ought to prompt him to make you one," said his wife.

Mr. Tolman went home and wrote a will. He left all his property, with the exception of a few legacies, to the richest and most powerful charitable organisation in the country.

"People will think I'm crazy," said he to himself; "and if I should die while I am carrying out my plan, I'll leave the task of defending my sanity to people who are able to make a good fight for me." And before he went to bed he had his will signed and witnessed.

The next day he packed a trunk and left for the neighbouring city. His apartments were to be kept in readiness for his return at any time. If you had seen him walking over to the railroad depôt, you would have taken him for a man of forty-five.

When he arrived at his destination, Mr. Tolman established himself temporarily at an hotel, and spent the next three or four days in walking about the city looking for what he wanted. What he

wanted was rather difficult to define, but the way in which he put the matter to himself was something like this—

" I'd like to find a snug little place where I can live and carry on some business which I can attend to myself, and which will bring me into contact with people of all sorts—people who will interest me. It must be a small business, because I don't want to have to work very hard, and it must be snug and comfortable, because I want to enjoy it. I would like a shop of some sort, because that brings a man face to face with his fellow-creatures."

The city in which he was walking about was one of the best places in the country in which to find the place of business he desired. It was full of independent little shops. But Mr. Tolman could not readily find one which resembled his ideal. A small dry-goods establishment seemed to presuppose a female proprietor. A grocery store would give him many interesting customers ; but he did not know much about groceries, and the business did not appear to him to possess any aesthetic features. He was much pleased by a small shop belonging to a taxidermist. It was exceedingly cosy, and the business was probably not so great as to overwork any one. He might send the birds and beasts which were brought to be stuffed to some practical operator, and have him put them in proper condition for the customers. He might—But no ; it would be very unsatisfactory to engage in a business of which he knew absolutely nothing. A taxidermist ought not to blush with ignorance when asked some simple questions about a little dead bird or a defunct fish. And so he tore himself from the window of this fascinating place, where, he fancied, had his education been differently managed, he could in time have shown the world the spectacle of a cheerful and unblighted Mr. Venus.

The shop which at last appeared to suit him best was one which he had passed and looked at several times before it struck him favourably. It was in a small brick house in a side street, but not far from one of the main business avenues of the city. The shop seemed devoted to articles of stationery and small notions of various kinds not easy to be classified. He had stopped to look at three penknives fastened to a card, which was propped up in the little show-window, supported on one side by a chess-board with " History of Asia " in gilt letters on the back, and on the other by a small violin labelled " 1 dollar " ; and as he gazed past these articles into the interior of the shop, which was now lighted up, it gradually dawned upon him that it was something like his ideal of an attractive and interesting business place. At any rate he would go in and look at it. He did not care for a violin, even at the low price marked on the one in the window, but a new pocket-knife might be useful ; so he walked in and asked to look at pocket-knives.

The shop was in charge of a very pleasant old lady of about sixty,

who sat sewing behind the little counter. While she went to the window, and very carefully reached over the articles displayed therein to get the card of penknives, Mr. Tolman looked about him. The shop was quite small, but there seemed to be a good deal in it. There were shelves behind the counter, and there were shelves on the opposite wall, and they all seemed well filled with something or other. In the corner near the old lady's chair was a little coal stove with a bright fire in it, and at the back of the shop, at the top of two steps, was a glass door partly open, through which he saw a small room, with a red carpet on the floor and a little table apparently set for a meal.

Mr. Tolman looked at the knives when the old lady showed them to him, and after a good deal of consideration he selected one which he thought would be a good knife to give a boy. Then he looked over some things in the way of paper-cutters, whist-markers, and such small matters, which were in a glass case on the counter ; and while he looked at them he talked to the old lady.

She was a friendly, sociable body, and very glad to have any one to talk to, and so it was not at all difficult for Mr. Tolman, by some general remarks, to draw from her a great many points about herself and her shop. She was a widow, with a son who, from her remarks, must have been forty years old. He was connected with a mercantile establishment and they had lived here for a long time. While her son was a salesman and came home every evening, this was very pleasant ; but after he became a commercial traveller and was away from the city for months at a time, she did not like it at all. It was very lonely for her.

Mr. Tolman's heart rose within him, but he did not interrupt her.

" If I could do it," said she, " I would give up this place and go and live with my sister in the country. It would be better for both of us, and Henry could come there just as well as here when he gets back from his trips."

" Why don't you sell out ? " asked Mr. Tolman a little fearfully, for he began to think that all this was too easy sailing to be entirely safe.

" That would not be easy," said she with a smile. " It might be a long time before we could find any one who would want to take the place. We have a fair trade in the store, but it isn't what it used to be when times were better ; and the library is falling off too. Most of the books are getting pretty old, and it don't pay to spend much money for new ones now."

" The library ! " said Mr. Tolman. " Have you a library ? "

" Oh yes," replied the old lady. " I've had a circulating library here for nearly fifteen years. There it is, on those two upper shelves behind you."

Mr. Tolman turned, and beheld two long rows of books in brown paper covers, with a short step-ladder standing near the door of the

inner room, by which these shelves might be reached. This pleased him greatly. He had had no idea that there was a library here.

"I declare!" said he. "It must be very pleasant to manage a circulating library—a small one like this, I mean. I shouldn't mind going into a business of the kind myself."

The old lady looked up, surprised. Did he wish to go into business? She had not supposed that, just from looking at him.

Mr. Tolman explained his views to her. He did not tell what he had been doing in the way of business or what Mr. Canterfield was doing for him now. He merely stated his present wishes, and acknowledged to her that it was the attractiveness of her establishment that had led him to come in.

"Then you do not want the penknife?" she said quickly.

"Oh yes, I do," said he; "and I really believe, if we can come to terms, that I would like the two other knives, together with the rest of your stock in trade."

The old lady laughed a little nervously. She hoped very much indeed that they could come to terms. She brought a chair from the back room, and Mr. Tolman sat down with her by the stove to talk it over. Few customers came in to interrupt them and they talked the matter over very thoroughly. They both came to the conclusion that there would be no difficulty about terms, nor about Mr. Tolman's ability to carry on the business after a very little instruction from the present proprietress. When Mr. Tolman left, it was with the understanding that he was to call again in a couple of days, when the son Henry would be at home, and matters could be definitely arranged.

When the three met, the bargain was soon struck. As each party was so desirous of making it, few difficulties were interposed. The old lady, indeed, was in favour of some delay in the transfer of the establishment, as she would like to clean and dust every shelf and corner and every article in the place; but Mr. Tolman was in a hurry to take possession; and as the son Henry would have to start off on another trip in a short time, he wanted to see his mother moved and settled before he left. There was not much to move but trunks and bandboxes and some antiquated pieces of furniture of special value to the old lady, for Mr. Tolman insisted on buying everything in the house, just as it stood. The whole thing did not cost him, he said to himself, as much as some of his acquaintances would pay for a horse. The methodical son Henry took an account of stock, and Mr. Tolman took several lessons from the old lady, in which she explained to him how to find out the selling prices of the various articles from the marks on the little tags attached to them; and she particularly instructed him in the management of the circulating library. She informed him of the character of the books and, as far as possible, of the character of the regular patrons. She told him whom he might trust to take out a book without paying for the

one brought in if they didn't happen to have the change with them, and she indicated with little crosses opposite their names those persons who should be required to pay cash down for what they had had before receiving further benefits.

It was astonishing to see what interest Mr. Tolman took in all this. He was really anxious to meet some of the people about whom the old lady discoursed. He tried, too, to remember a few of the many things she told him of her methods of buying and selling and the general management of her shop; and he probably did not forget more than three-fourths of what she told him.

Finally, everything was settled to the satisfaction of the two male parties to the bargain—although the old lady thought of a hundred things she would yet like to do—and one fine frosty afternoon a car-load of furniture and baggage left the door, the old lady and her son took leave of the old place, and Mr. Tolman was left sitting behind the little counter, the sole manager and proprietor of a circulating library and a stationery and notion shop. He laughed when he thought of it, but he rubbed his hands and felt very well satisfied.

"There is nothing really crazy about it," he said to himself. "If there is a thing that I think I would like, and I can afford to have it, and there's no harm in it, why not have it?"

There was nobody there to say anything against this; so Mr. Tolman rubbed his hands again before the fire, and rose to walk up and down his shop, and wonder who would be his first customer.

In the course of twenty minutes a little boy opened the door and came in. Mr. Tolman hastened behind the counter to receive his commands. The little boy wanted two sheets of note-paper and an envelope.

"Any particular kind?" asked Mr. Tolman.

The boy didn't know of any particular variety being desired. He thought the same kind he always got would do; and he looked very hard at Mr. Tolman, evidently wondering at the change in the shopkeeper, but asking no questions.

"You are a regular customer, I suppose," said Mr. Tolman, opening several boxes of paper which he had taken down from the shelves. "I have just begun business here and don't know what kind of paper you have been in the habit of buying. But I suppose this will do"; and he took out a couple of sheets of the best, with an envelope to match. These he carefully tied up in a piece of thin brown paper and gave to the boy, who handed him three cents. Mr. Tolman took them, smiled, and then having made a rapid calculation, he called to the boy, who was just opening the door, and gave him back one cent.

"You have paid me too much," he said.

The boy took the cent, looked at Mr. Tolman, and then got out of the store as quickly as he could.

"Such profits as that are enormous," said Mr. Tolman; "but I suppose the small sales balance them." This Mr. Tolman subsequently found to be the case.

One or two other customers came in in the course of the afternoon, and about dark the people who took out books began to arrive. These kept Mr. Tolman very busy. He not only had to do a good deal of entering and cancelling, but he had to answer a great many questions about the change in proprietorship, and the probability of his getting in some new books, with suggestions as to the quantity and character of these, mingled with a few dissatisfied remarks in regard to the volumes already on hand.

Every one seemed sorry that the old lady had gone away; but Mr. Tolman was so pleasant and anxious to please, and took such an interest in their selection of books, that only one of the subscribers appeared to take the change very much to heart. This was a young man who was forty-three cents in arrears. He was a long time selecting a book, and when at last he brought it to Mr. Tolman to be entered, he told him in a low voice that he hoped there would be no objection to letting his account run on for a little while longer. On the first of the month he would settle it, and then he hoped to be able to pay cash whenever he brought in a book.

Mr. Tolman looked for his name on the old lady's list, and finding no cross against it, told him that it was all right, and that the first of the month would do very well. The young man went away perfectly satisfied with the new librarian. Thus did Mr. Tolman begin to build up his popularity. As the evening grew on he found himself becoming very hungry; but he did not like to shut up the shop, for every now and then some one dropped in, sometimes to ask what time it was, and sometimes to make a little purchase, while there were still some library patrons coming in at intervals.

However, taking courage during a short rest from customers, he put up the shutters, locked the door, and hurried off to a hotel, where he partook of a meal such as few keepers of little shops even think of indulging in.

The next morning Mr. Tolman got his own breakfast. This was delightful. He had seen how cosily the old lady had spread her table in the little back room, where there was a stove suitable for any cooking he might wish to indulge in, and he longed for such a cosy meal. There were plenty of stock provisions in the house, which he had purchased with the rest of the goods; and he went out and bought himself a fresh loaf of bread. Then he broiled a piece of ham, made some good strong tea, boiled some eggs, and had a breakfast on the little round table, which, though plain enough, he enjoyed more than any breakfast at his club which he could remember. He had opened the shop, and sat facing the glass door, hoping, almost, that there would be some interruption to his meal. It would seem so much more proper in that sort of business if he

had to get up and go and attend to a customer.

Before evening of that day Mr. Tolman became convinced that he would soon be obliged to employ a boy or some one to attend to the establishment during his absence. After breakfast, a woman recommended by the old lady came to make his bed and clean up generally, but when she had gone he was left alone with his shop. He determined not to allow this responsibility to injure his health, and so at one o'clock boldly locked the shop door and went out to his lunch.

He hoped that no one would call during his absence, but when he returned he found a little girl with a pitcher standing at the door. She came to borrow half a pint of milk.

"Milk!" exclaimed Mr. Tolman in surprise. "Why, my child, I have no milk. I don't even use it in my tea."

The little girl looked very much disappointed. "Is Mrs. Walker gone away for good?" said she.

"Yes," replied Mr. Tolman. "But I would be just as willing to lend you the milk as she would be if I had any. Is there any place near here where you can buy milk?"

"Oh yes," said the girl; "you can get it round in the market-house."

"How much would half a pint cost?" he asked.

"Three cents," replied the girl.

"Well, then," said Mr. Tolman, "here are three cents. You can go and buy the milk for me and then you can borrow it. Will that suit?"

The girl thought it would suit very well, and away she went.

Even this little incident pleased Mr. Tolman. It was so very novel. When he came back from his dinner in the evening, he found two circulating library subscribers stamping their feet on the door-step, and he afterwards heard that several others had called and gone away. It would certainly injure the library if he suspended business at meal-times. He could easily have his choice of a hundred boys if he chose to advertise for one, but he shrank from having a youngster in the place. It would interfere greatly with his cosiness and his experiences. He might possibly find a boy who went to school, and who would be willing to come at noon and in the evening if he were paid enough. But it would have to be a very steady and responsible boy. He would think it over before taking any steps.

He thought it over for a day or two, but he did not spend his whole time in doing so. When he had no customers, he sauntered about in the little parlour over the shop, with its odd old furniture, its quaint prints on the walls, and its absurd ornaments on the mantelpiece. The other little rooms seemed almost as funny to him, and he was sorry when the bell on the shop door called him down from their contemplation. It was pleasant to him to think that he owned all these odd things. The ownership of the varied goods in the shop

also gave him an agreeable feeling which none of his other possessions had ever afforded him. It was all so odd and novel.

He liked much to look over the books in the library. Many of them were old novels, the names of which were familiar enough to him, but which he had never read. He determined to read some of them as soon as he felt fixed and settled.

In looking over the book in which the names and accounts of the subscribers were entered, he amused himself by wondering what sort of persons they were who had out certain books. Who, for instance, wanted to read *The Book of Cats*; and who could possibly care for *The Mysteries of Udolpho*? But the unknown person in regard to whom Mr. Tolman felt the greatest curiosity was the subscriber who now had in his possession a volume entitled *Dormstock's Logarithms of the Diapason.*

"How on earth," exclaimed Mr. Tolman, "did such a book get into this library; and where on earth did the person spring from who would want to take it out? And not only want to take it," he continued as he examined the entry regarding the volume, "but come and have it renewed one, two, three, four—nine times! He has had that book for eighteen weeks!"

Without exactly making up his mind to do so, Mr. Tolman deferred taking steps toward getting an assistant until P. Glascow, the person in question, should make an appearance, and it was nearly time for the book to be brought in again.

"If I get a boy now," thought Mr. Tolman, "Glascow will be sure to come and bring the book while I am out."

In almost exactly two weeks from the date of the last renewal of the book P. Glascow came in. It was the middle of the afternoon and Mr. Tolman was alone. This investigator of musical philosophy was a quiet young man of about thirty, wearing a light brown cloak, and carrying under one arm a large book.

P. Glascow was surprised when he heard of the change in the proprietorship of the library. Still he hoped that there would be no objection to his renewing the book which he had with him and which he had taken out some time ago.

"Oh no," said Mr. Tolman, "none in the world. In fact, I don't suppose there are any other subscribers who would want it. I have had the curiosity to look to see if it had ever been taken out before, and I find it has not."

The young man smiled quietly. "No," said he, "I suppose not. It is not every one who would care to study the higher mathematics of music, especially when treated as Dormstock treats the subject."

"He seems to go into it pretty deeply," remarked Mr. Tolman, who had taken up the book. "At least I should think so, judging from all these calculations, and problems, and squares, and cubes."

"Indeed he does," said Glascow; "and although I have had the book some months, and have more reading-time at my disposal than

most persons, I have only reached the fifty-sixth page, and doubt if I shall not have to review some of that before I can feel that I thoroughly understand it."

"And there are three hundred and forty pages in all." said Mr. Tolman compassionately.

"Yes," replied the other; "but I am quite sure that the matter will grow easier as I proceed. I have found that out from what I have already done."

"You say you have a good deal of leisure?" remarked Mr. Tolman. "Is the musical business dull at present?"

"Oh, I'm not in the musical business," said Glascow. "I have a great love for music and wish thoroughly to understand it; but my business is quite different. I am a night druggist and that is the reason I have so much leisure for reading."

"A night druggist?" repeated Mr. Tolman inquiringly.

"Yes, sir," said the other. "I am in a large down town drug-store, which is kept open all night, and I go on duty after the day-clerks leave."

"And does that give you more leisure?" asked Mr. Tolman.

"It seems to," answered Glascow. "I sleep until about noon, and then I have the rest of the day, until seven o'clock, to myself. I think that people who work at night can make a more satisfactory use of their own time than those who work in the daytime. In the summer I can take a trip on the river, or go somewhere out of town, everyday if I like."

"Daylight is more available for many things, that is true," said Mr. Tolman. "But is it not dreadfully lonely sitting in a drug-store all night? There can't be many people to come to buy medicine at night. I thought there was generally a night-bell to drug stores by which a clerk could be awakened if anybody wanted anything."

"It's not very lonely in our store at night," said Glascow. "In fact it's often more lively then than in the daytime. You see, we are right down among the newspaper offices, and there's always somebody coming in for soda-water, or cigars, or something or other. The store is a bright, warm place for the night editors and reporters to meet together and talk and drink hot soda, and there's always a knot of 'em around the stove about the time the papers begin to go to press. And they're a lively set, I can tell you, sir. I've heard some of the best stories I ever heard in my life told in our place after three o'clock in the morning."

"A strange life!" said Mr. Tolman. "Do you know, I never thought that people amused themselves in that way. And night after night, I suppose."

"Yes, sir, night after night, Sundays and all."

The night druggist now took up his book.

"Going home to read?" asked Mr. Tolman.

"Well, no" said the other; "it's rather cold this afternoon to

read. I think I'll take a brisk walk."

"Can't you leave your book until you return?" asked Mr. Tolman; "that is, if you will come back this way. It's an awkward book to carry about."

"Thank you, I will," said Glascow. "I shall come back this way."

When he had gone, Mr. Tolman took up the book and began to look over it more carefully than he had done before. But his examination did not last long.

"How anybody of common-sense can take any interest in this stuff is beyond my comprehension," said Mr. Tolman as he closed the book and put it on a little shelf behind the counter.

When Glascow came back, Mr. Tolman asked him to stay and warm himself; and then, after they had talked for a short time, Mr. Tolman began to feel hungry. He had his winter appetite and had lunched early. So said he to the night druggist, who had opened his "Dormstock," "How would you like to sit here and read awhile, while I go and get my dinner? I will light the gas and you can be very confortable here if you are not in a hurry."

P. Glascow was in no hurry at all and was very glad to have some quiet reading by a warm fire; and so Mr. Tolman left him, feeling perfectly confident that a man who had been allowed by the old lady to renew a book nine times must be perfectly trustworthy.

When Mr. Tolman returned, the two had some further conversation in the corner by the little stove.

"It must be rather annoying," said the night druggist, "not to be able to go out to your meals without shutting up your shop. If you like," said he rather hestitatingly, "I will step in about this time in the afternoon and stay here while you go to dinner. I'll be glad to do this until you get an assistant. I can easily attend to most people who come in and others can wait."

Mr. Tolman jumped at this proposition. It was exactly what he wanted.

So P. Glascow came every afternoon and read "Dormstock" while Mr. Tolman went to dinner; and before long he came at lunch-time also. It was just as convenient as not, he said. He had finished his breakfast and would like to read awhile. Mr. Tolman fancied that the night druggist's lodgings were, perhaps, not very well warmed, which idea explained the desire to walk rather than read on a cold afternoon. Glascow's name was entered on the free list, and he always took away the "Dormstock" at night, because he might have a chance of looking into it at the store when custom began to grow slack in the latter part of the early morning.

One afternoon there came into the shop a young lady, who brought back two books which she had had for more than a month. She made no excuses for keeping the books longer than the prescribed time, but simply handed them in and paid her fine. Mr. Tolman

did not like to take this money, for it was the first of the kind he had received ; but the young lady looked a if she was well able to afford the luxury of keeping books over their time, and business was business. So he gravely gave her her change. Then she said she would like to take out *Dormstock's Logarithms of the Diapason.*

Mr. Tolman stared at her. She was a bright, handsome young lady and looked as if she had very good sense. He could not understand it. But he told her the book was out.

" Out ! " she said. " Why, it's always out. It seems strange to me that there should be such a demand for that book. I have been trying to get it for ever so long."

" It *is* strange," said Mr. Tolman ; " but it is certainly in demand. Did Mrs. Walker ever make you any promises about it ? "

" No," said she ; " but I thought my turn would come around some time. And I particularly want the book just now."

Mr. Tolman felt somewhat troubled. He knew that the night druggist ought not to monopolise the volume, and yet he did not wish to disoblige one who was so useful to him and who took such an earnest interest in the book. And he could not temporise with the young lady and say that he thought the book would soon be in. He knew it would not. There were three hundred and forty pages of it. So he merely remarked that he was sorry.

" So am I," said the young lady, " very sorry. It so happens that just now I have a peculiar opportunity for studying that book which may not occur again."

There was something in Mr. Tolman's sympathetic face which seemed to invite her confidence, and she continued.

" I am a teacher," she said, " and on account of certain circumstances I have a holiday for a month, which I intended to give up almost entirely to the study of music, and I particularly wanted ' Dormstock.' Do you think there is any chance of its early return, and will you reserve it for me ? "

" Reserve it ! " said Mr. Tolman. " Most certainly I will." And then he reflected a second or two. " If you will come here the day after to-morrow, I will be able to tell you something definite."

She said she would come.

Mr. Tolman was out a long time at lunch-time the next day. He went to all the leading bookstores to see if he could buy a copy of Dormstock's great work. But he was unsuccessful. The booksellers told him that there was no probability that he could get a copy in the country, unless, indeed, he found it in the stock of some second-hand dealer. There was no demand at all for it, and that if he even sent for it to England, where it was published, it was not likely he could get it, for it had been long out of print. The next day he went to several second-hand stores, but no " Dormstock " could he find.

When he came back he spoke to Glascow on the subject. He was

sorry to do so, but thought that simple justice compelled him to mention the matter. The night druggist was thrown into a perturbed state of mind by the information that some one wanted his beloved book.

"A woman!" he exclaimed. "Why, she would not understand two pages out of the whole of it. It is too bad. I didn't suppose any one would want this book."

"Do not disturb yourself too much," said Mr. Tolman. "I am not sure that you ought to give it up."

"I am very glad to hear you say so," said Glascow. "I have no doubt it is only a passing fancy with her. I dare say she would really rather have a good new novel"; and then, having heard that the lady was expected that afternoon, he went out to walk, with the "Dormstock" under his arm.

When the young lady arrived, an hour or so later, she was not at all satisfied to take out a new novel, and was very sorry indeed not to find the *Logarithms of the Diapason* waiting for her. Mr. Tolman told her that he had tried to buy another copy of the work, and for this she expressed herself gratefully. He also found himself compelled to say that the book was in the possession of a gentleman who had had it for some time—all the time it had been out, in fact—and had not yet finished it.

At this the young lady seemed somewhat nettled.

"Is it not against the rules for any person to keep one book out so long?" she asked.

"No," said Mr. Tolman. "I have looked into that. Our rules are very simple, and merely say that a book may be renewed by the payment of a certain sum."

"Then I am never to have it?" remarked the young lady.

"Oh, I wouldn't despair about it," said Mr. Tolman. "He has not had time to reflect upon the matter. He is a reasonable young man, and I believe that he will be willing to give up his study of the book for a time, and let you take it."

"No," said she, "I don't wish that. If he is studying, as you say he is, day and night, I do not wish to interrupt him. I should want the book at least a month, and that, I suppose, would upset his course of study entirely. But I do not think any one should begin in a circulating library to study a book that will take him a year to finish; for, from what you say, it will take this gentleman at least that time to finish Dormstock's book." And so she went her way.

When P. Glascow heard all this in the evening, he was very grave. He had evidently been reflecting.

"It is not fair," said he. "I ought not to keep the book so long. I now give it up for a while. You may let her have it when she comes." And he put the "Dormstock" on the counter, and went and sat down by the stove.

Mr. Tolman was grieved. He knew the night druggist had done right, but still he was sorry for him. "What will you do?" he asked. "Will you stop your studies?"

"Oh no!" said Glascow, gazing solemnly into the stove. "I will take up some other books on the diapason which I have, and will so keep my ideas fresh on the subject until this lady is done with the book. I do not really believe she will study it very long." And then he added: "If it is all the same to you, I will come around here and read, as I have been doing, until you shall get a regular assistant."

Mr. Tolman would be delighted to have him come, he said. He had entirely given up the idea of getting an assistant; but this he did not say.

It was some time before the lady came back, and Mr. Tolman was afraid she was not coming at all. But she did come, and asked for Miss Burney's *Evelina*. She smiled when she named the book, and said that she believed she would have to take a novel after all, and she had always wanted to read that one.

"I wouldn't take a novel if I were you," said Mr. Tolman; and he triumphantly took down the "Dormstock" and laid it before her.

She was evidently much pleased, but when he told her of Mr. Glascow's gentlemanly conduct in the matter, her countenance instantly changed.

"Not at all," said she, laying down the book; "I will not break up his study. I will take the *Evelina*, if you please."

And as no persuasion from Mr. Tolman had any effect upon her, she went away with Miss Burney's novel in her muff.

"Now, then," said Mr. Tolman to Glascow, in the evening, "you may as well take the book along with you. She won't have it."

But Glascow would do nothing of the kind. "No," he remarked, as he sat looking into the stove; "when I said I would let her have it, I meant it. She'll take it when she sees that it continues to remain in the library."

Glascow was mistaken: she did not take it, having the idea that he would soon conclude that it would be wiser for him to read it than to let it stand idly on the shelf.

"It would serve them both right," said Mr. Tolman to himself, "if somebody else would come and take it." But there was no one else among his subscribers who would even think of such a thing.

One day, however, the young lady came in and asked to look at the book. "Don't think that I am going to take it out," she said, noticing Mr. Tolman's look of pleasure as he handed her the volume. "I only wish to see what he says on a certain subject which I am studying now"; and so she sat down by the stove, on the chair which Mr. Tolman placed for her, and opened "Dormstock."

She sat earnestly poring over the book for half an hour or more,

and then she looked up and said, " I really cannot make out what this part means. Excuse my troubling you, but I would be very glad if you would explain the latter part of this passage."

" Me ! " exclaimed Mr. Tolman ; " why, my good madam—miss, I mean—I couldn't explain it to you if it were to save my life. But what page is it ? " said he, looking at his watch.

" Page twenty-four," answered the young lady.

" Oh, well, then," said he, " if you can wait ten or fifteen minutes, the gentleman who has had the book will be here, and I think he can explain anything in the first part of the work."

The young lady seemed to hesitate whether to wait or not ; but as she had a certain curiosity to see what sort of a person he was who had been so absorbed in the book, she concluded to sit a little longer and look into some other parts of the book. The night druggist soon came in ; and when Mr. Tolman introduced him to the lady, he readily agreed to explain the passage to her if he could. So Mr. Tolman got him a chair from the inner room, and he also sat down by the stove.

The explanation was difficult, but it was achieved at last ; and then the young lady broached the subject of leaving the book unused. This was discussed for some time, but came to nothing, although Mr. Tolman put down his afternoon paper and joined in the argument, urging, among other points, that as the matter now stood he was deprived by the dead-lock of all income from the book. But even this strong argument proved of no avail.

" Then I'll tell you what I wish you would do," said Mr. Tolman, as the young lady rose to go ; " come here and look at the book whenever you wish to do so. I'd like to make this more of a reading-room anyway. It would give me more company."

After this the young lady looked into " Dormstock " when she came in ; and as her holidays had been extended by the continued absence of the family in which she taught, she had plenty of time for study, and came quite frequently. She often met with Glascow in the shop ; and on such occasions they generally consulted " Dormstock," and sometimes had quite lengthy talks on musical matters. One afternoon they came in together, having met on their way to the library, and entered into a conversation on diapasonic logarithms, which continued during the lady's stay in the shop.

" The proper thing," thought Mr. Tolman, " would be for these two people to get married. Then they could take the book and study it to their hearts' content. And they would certainly suit each other, for they are both greatly attached to musical mathematics and philosophy, and neither of them either plays or sings, as they have told me. It would be an admirable match."

Mr. Tolman thought over this matter a good deal, and at last determined to mention it to Glascow. When he did so, the young man coloured, and expressed the opinion that it would be of no use to

think of such a thing. But it was evident from his manner and subsequent discourse that he had thought of it.

Mr. Tolman gradually became quite anxious on the subject, especially as the night druggist did not seem inclined to take any steps in the matter. The weather was now beginning to be warmer, and Mr. Tolman reflected that the little house and the little shop were probably much more cosy and comfortable in winter than in summer. There were higher buildings all about the house, and even now he began to feel that the circulation of air would be quite as agreeable as the circulation of books. He thought a good deal about his airy rooms in the neighbouring city. "Mr. Glascow," said he, one afternoon, "I have made up my mind to shortly sell out this business."

"What!" exclaimed the other. "Do you mean you will give it up and go away—leave the place altogether?"

"Yes," replied Mr. Tolman, "I shall give up the place entirely, and leave the city." The night druggist was shocked. He had spent many happy hours in that shop, and his hours there were now becoming pleasanter than ever. If Mr. Tolman went away, all this must end. Nothing of the kind could be expected of any new proprietor.

"And considering this," continued Mr. Tolman, "I think it would be well for you to bring your love matters to a conclusion while I am here to help you."

"My love matters!" exclaimed Mr. Glascow, with a flush.

"Yes, certainly," said Mr. Tolman. "I have eyes, and I know all about it. Now let me tell you what I think. When a thing is to be done, it ought to be done the first time there is a good chance. That's the way I do business. Now you might as well come around here to-morrow afternoon, prepared to propose to Miss Edwards. She is due to-morrow, for she has been two days away. If she don't come, we'll postpone the matter until the next day. But you should be ready to-morrow. I don't believe you can see her much when you don't meet her here; for that family is expected back very soon, and from what I infer from her account of her employers, you won't care to visit her at their house."

The night druggist wanted to think about it.

"There is nothing to think," said Mr. Tolman. "We know all about the lady." (He spoke truly, for he had informed himself about both parties to the affair.) "Take my advice, and be here to-morrow afternoon—and come rather early."

The next morning Mr. Tolman went up to his parlour on the second floor, and brought down two blue stuffed chairs, the best he had, and put them in the little room back of the shop. He also brought down one or two knick-knacks and put them on the mantelpiece, and he dusted and brightened up the room as well as he could. He even covered the table with a red cloth from the parlour.

When the young lady arrived, he invited her to walk into the back room to look over some new books he had just got in. If she had known he proposed to give up the business, she would have thought it rather strange that he should be buying new books. But she knew nothing of his intentions. When she was seated at the table whereon the new books were spread, Mr. Tolman stepped outside of the shop door to watch for Glascow's approach. He soon appeared.

"Walk right in," said Mr. Tolman. "She's in the back room looking over books. I'll wait here, and keep out customers as far as possible. It's pleasant, and I want a little fresh air. I'll give you twenty minutes."

Glascow was pale, but he went in without a word; and Mr. Tolman, with his hands under his coat-tail, and his feet rather far apart, established a blockade on the door-step. He stood there for some time looking at the people outside, and wondering what the people inside were doing. The little girl who had borrowed the milk of him, and who had never returned it, was about to pass the door; but seeing him standing there, she crossed over to the other side of the street. But he did not notice her. He was wondering if it was time to go in. A boy came up to the door, and wanted to know if he kept Easter-eggs. Mr. Tolman was happy to say he did not. When he had allowed the night druggist a very liberal twenty minutes, he went in. As he entered the shop door, giving the bell a very decided ring as he did so, P. Glascow came down the two steps that led from the inner room. His face showed that it was all right with him.

A few days after this, Mr. Tolman sold out his stock, good-will, and fixtures, together with the furniture and lease of the house. And who should he sell out to but to Mr. Glascow! This piece of business was one of the happiest points of the whole affair. There was no reason why the happy couple should not be married very soon, and the young lady was charmed to give up her position as teacher and governess in a family, and come and take charge of that delightful little store and that cunning little house, with almost everything in it that they wanted. One thing in the establishment Mr. Tolman refused to sell. That was Dormstock's great work. He made the couple a present of the volume, and between two of the earlier pages he placed a bank-note, which in value was very much more than that of the ordinary wedding-gift.

"And what are *you* going to do?" they asked of him, when all these things were settled. And then he told them how he was going back to his business in the neighbouring city, and he told them what it was, and how he had come to manage a circulating library. They did not think him crazy. People who studied the logarithms of the diapason would not be apt to think a man crazy for such a little thing as that. When Mr. Tolman returned to the establishment of Pusey & Co., he found everything going on very satisfactorily.

"You look ten years younger, sir," said Mr. Canterfield. "You must have had a very pleasant time. I did not think there was enough to interest you in —— for so long a time."

"Interest me!" exclaimed Mr. Tolman. "Why, objects of interest crowded on me. I never had a more enjoyable holiday in my life."

When he went home that evening (and he found himself quite willing to go), he tore up the will he had made. He now felt that there was no necessity for proving his sanity.

THE TRANSFERRED GHOST

FRANK R. STOCKTON

THE country residence of Mr. John Hinckman was a delightful place to me, for many reasons. It was the abode of a genial, though somewhat impulsive, hospitality. It had broad, smooth-shaven lawns and towering oaks and elms; there were bosky shades at several points, and not far from the house there was a little rill spanned by a rustic bridge with the bark on; there were fruits and flowers, pleasant people, chess, billiards, rides, walks, and fishing. These were great attractions, but none of them, nor all of them together, would have been sufficient to hold me to the place very long. I had been invited for the trout season, but should, probably, have finished my visit early in the summer had it not been that upon fair days, when the grass was dry, and the sun not too hot, and there was but little wind, there strolled beneath the lofty elms, or passed lightly through the bosky shades, the form of my Madeline.

This lady was not, in very truth, my Madeline. She had never given herself to me, nor had I, in any way, acquired possession of her. But as I considered her possession the only sufficient reason for the continuance of my existence, I called her, in my reveries, mine. It may have been that I would not have been obliged to confine the use of this possessive pronoun to my reveries had I confessed the state of my feelings to the lady.

But this was an unusually difficult thing to do. Not only did I dread, as almost all lovers dread, taking the step which would in an instant put an end to that delightful season which may be termed the ante-interrogatory period of love, and which might at the same time terminate all intercourse or connection with the object of my passion; but I was, also, dreadfully afraid of John Hinckman. This gentleman was a good friend of mine, but it would have required a

bolder man than I was at that time to ask him for the gift of his niece, who was the head of his household, and, according to his own frequent statement, the main prop of his declining years. Had Madeline acquiesced in my general views on the subject, I might have felt encouraged to open the matter to Mr. Hinckman, but, as I said before, I had never asked her whether or not she would be mine. I thought of these things at all hours of the day and night, particularly the latter.

I was lying awake one night, in the great bed in my spacious chamber, when, by the dim light of the new moon, which partially filled the room, I saw John Hinckman standing by a large chair near the door. I was very much surprised at this for two reasons. In the first place, my host had never before come into my room, and, in the second place, he had gone from home that morning, and had not expected to return for several days. It was for this reason that I had been able that evening to sit much later than usual with Madeline on the moonlit porch. The figure was certainly that of John Hinckman in his ordinary dress, but there was a vagueness and indistinctness about it which presently assured me that it was a ghost. Had the good old man been murdered? and had his spirit come to tell me of the deed, and to confide to me the protection of his dear ——? My heart fluttered at what I was about to think, but at this instant the figure spoke.

"Do you know," he said, with a countenance that indicated anxiety, "if Mr. Hinckman will return to-night?"

I thought it well to maintain a calm exterior, and I answered:

"We do not expect him."

"I am glad of that," said he, sinking into the chair by which he stood. "During the two years and a half that I have inhabited this house, that man has never before been away for a single night. You can't imagine the relief it gives me."

And as he spoke he stretched out his legs and leaned back in the chair. His form became less vague, and the colours of his garments more distinct and evident, while an expression of gratified relief succeeded to the anxiety of his countenance.

"Two years and a half!" I exclaimed. "I don't understand you."

"It is fully that length of time," said the ghost, "since I first came here. Mine is not an ordinary case. But before I say anything more about it, let me ask you again if you are sure Mr. Hinckman will not return to-night?"

"I am as sure of it as I can be of anything," I answered. "He left to-day for Bristol, two hundred miles away."

"Then I will go on," said the ghost, "for I am glad to have the opportunity of talking to some one who will listen to me; but if John Hinckman should come in and catch me here, I should be frightened out of my wits."

"This is all very strange," I said, greatly puzzled by what I had heard. "Are you the ghost of Mr. Hinckman?"

This was a bold question, but my mind was so full of other emotions that there seemed to be no room for that of fear.

"Yes, I am his ghost," my companion replied, "and yet I have no right to be. And this is what makes me so uneasy and so much afraid of him. It is a strange story, and, I truly believe, without precedent. Two years and a half ago, John Hinckman was dangerously ill in this very room. At one time he was so far gone that he was really believed to be dead. It was in consequence of too precipitate a report in regard to this matter that I was, at that time, appointed to be his ghost. Imagine my surprise and horror, sir, when, after I had accepted the position and assumed its responsibilities, that old man revived, became convalescent, and eventually regained his usual health. My situation was now one of extreme delicacy and embarrassment. I had no power to return to my original unembodiment, and I had no right to be the ghost of a man who was not dead. I was advised by my friends to quietly maintain my position, and was assured that, as John Hinckman was an elderly man, it could not be long before I could rightfully assume the position for which I had been selected. But I tell you sir," he continued, with animation, "the old fellow seems as vigorous as ever, and I have no idea how much longer this annoying state of things will continue. I spend my time trying to get out of that old man's way. I must not leave this house, and he seems to follow me everywhere. I tell you, sir, he haunts me."

"That is truly a queer state of things," I remarked. "But why are you afraid of him? He couldn't hurt you."

"Of course he couldn't," said the ghost. "But his very presence is a shock and terror to me. Imagine, sir, how you would feel if my case were yours."

I could not imagine such a thing at all. I simply shuddered.

"And if one must be a wrongful ghost at all," the apparition continued, "it would be much pleasanter to be the ghost of some man other than John Hinckman. There is in him an irascibility of temper, accompanied by a facility of invective, which is seldom met with. And what would happen if he were to see me, and find out, as I am sure he would, how long and why I had inhabited his house, I can scarcely conceive. I have seen him in his bursts of passion, and although he did not hurt the people he stormed at any more than he would hurt me, they seemed to shrink before him."

All this I knew to be very true. Had it not been for this peculiarity of Mr. Hinckman, I might have been more willing to talk to him about his niece.

"I feel sorry for you," I said, for I really began to have a sympathetic feeling toward this unfortunate apparition. "Your case is indeed a hard one. It reminds me of those persons who have had

doubles, and I suppose a man would often be very angry indeed when he found that there was another being who was personating himself."

"Oh, the cases are not similar at all," said the ghost. "A double or *doppleganger* lives on the earth with a man, and, being exactly like him, he makes all sorts of trouble, of course. It is very different with me. I am not here to live with Mr. Hinckman. I am here to take his place. Now, it would make John Hinckman very angry if he knew that. Don't you know it would?"

I assented promptly.

"Now that he is away I can be easy for a little while," continued the ghost, "and I am so glad to have an opportunity of talking to you. I have frequently come into your room, and watched you while you slept, but did not dare to speak to you for fear that if you talked with me Mr. Hinckman would hear you, and come into the room to know why you were talking to yourself."

"But would he not hear you?" I asked.

"Oh no," said the other, "there are times when any one may see me, but no one hears me except the person to whom I address myself."

"But why did you wish to speak to me?" I asked.

"Because," replied the ghost, "I like occasionally to talk to people, and especially to some one like yourself, whose mind is so troubled and perturbed that you are not likely to be frightened by a visit from one of us. But I particularly wanted to ask you to do me a favour. There is every probability, so far as I can see, that John Hinckman will live a long time, and my situation is becoming insupportable. My great object at present is to get myself transferred, and I think that you may, perhaps, be of use to me."

"Transferred!" I exclaimed. "What do you mean by that?"

"What I mean," said the other, "is this: Now that I have started on my career I have got to be the ghost of somebody; and I want to be the ghost of a man who is really dead."

"I should think that would be easy enough," I said. "Opportunities must continually occur."

"Not at all! not at all!" said my companion quickly. "You have no idea what a rush and pressure there is for situations of this kind. Whenever a vacancy occurs, if I may express myself in that way, there are crowds of applications for the ghostship."

"I had no idea that such a state of things existed," I said, becoming quite interested in the matter. "There ought to be some regular system, or order of precedence, by which you could all take your turns like customers in a barber's shop."

"Oh dear, that would never do at all!" said the other. "Some of us would have to wait for ever. There is always a great rush whenever a good ghostship offers itself—while, as you know, there are some positions that no one would care for. And it was in con-

sequence of my being in too great a hurry on an occasion of the kind that I got myself into my present disagreeable predicament, and I have thought that it might be possible that you would help me out of it. You might know of a case where an opportunity for a ghostship was not generally expected, but which might present itself at any moment. If you would give me a short notice, I know I could arrange for a transfer."

"What do you mean?" I exclaimed. "Do you want me to commit suicide? Or to undertake a murder for your benefit?"

"Oh no, no, no!" said the other, with a vapoury smile. "I mean nothing of that kind. To be sure, there are lovers who are watched with considerable interest, such persons have been known, in moments of depression, to offer very desirable ghostships, but I did not think of anything of that kind in connection with you. You were the only person I cared to speak to, and I hoped that you might give me some information that would be of use; and, in return, I shall be very glad to help you in your love affair."

"You seem to know that I have such an affair," I said.

"Oh yes," replied the other, with a little yawn. "I could not be here so much as I have been without knowing all about that."

There was something horrible in the idea of Madeline and myself having been watched by a ghost, even, perhaps, when we wandered together in the most delightful and bosky places. But, then, this was quite an exceptional ghost, and I could not have the objections to him which would ordinarily arise in regard to beings of his class.

"I must go now," said the ghost, rising, "but I will see you somewhere to-morrow night. And remember—you help me, and I'll help you."

I had doubts the next morning as to the propriety of telling Madeline anything about this interview, and soon convinced myself that I must keep silent on the subject. If she knew there was a ghost about the house she would probably leave the place instantly. I did not mention the matter, and so regulated my demeanour that I am quite sure Madeline never suspected what had taken place. For some time I had wished that Mr. Hinckman would absent himself, for a day at least, from the premises. In such case I thought I might more easily nerve myself up to the point of speaking to Madeline on the subject of our future collateral existence, and now that the opportunity for such speech had really occurred, I did not feel ready to avail myself of it. What would become of me if she refused me?

I had an idea, however, that the lady thought that, if I were going to speak at all, this was the time. She must have known that certain sentiments were afloat within me, and she was not unreasonable in her wish to see the matter settled one way or the other. But I did not feel like taking a bold step in the dark. If she wished me to ask her to give herself to me, she ought to offer me some reason to

suppose that she would make the gift. If I saw no probability of such generosity, I would prefer that things should remain as they were.

That evening I was sitting with Madeline in the moonlit porch. It was nearly ten o'clock, and ever since supper-time I had been working myself up to the point of making an avowal of my sentiments. I had not positively determined to do this, but wished gradually to reach the proper point when, if the prospect looked bright, I might speak. My companion appeared to understand the situation—at least, I imagined that the nearer I came to a proposal the more she seemed to expect it. It was certainly a very critical and important epoch in my life. If I spoke, I should make myself happy or miserable for ever, and if I did not speak I had every reason to believe that the lady would not give me another chance to do so.

Sitting thus with Madeline, talking a little, and thinking very hard over these momentous matters, I looked up and saw the ghost, not a dozen feet away from us. He was sitting on the railing of the porch, one leg thrown up before him, the other dangling down as he leaned against a post. He was behind Madeline, but almost in front of me, as I sat facing the lady. It was fortunate that Madeline was looking out over the landscape, for I must have appeared very much startled. The ghost had told me that he would see me some time this night, but I did not think he would make his appearance when I was in the company of Madeline. If she should see the spirit of her uncle. I could not answer for the consequences. I made no exclamation, but the ghost evidently saw that I was troubled.

"Don't be afraid," he said—"I shall not let her see me; and she cannot hear me speak unless I address myself to her, which I do not intend to do."

I suppose I looked grateful.

"So you need not trouble yourself about that," the ghost continued; "but it seems to me that you are not getting along very well with your affair. If I were you, I should speak out without waiting any longer. You will never have a better chance. You are not likely to be interrupted; and, so far as I can judge, the lady seems disposed to listen to you favourably; that is, if she ever intends to do so. There is no knowing when John Hinckman will go away again; certainly not this summer. If I were in your place, I should never dare to make love to Hinckman's niece if he were anywhere about the place. If he should catch any one offering himself to Miss Madeline, he would then be a terrible man to encounter."

I agreed perfectly to all this.

"I cannot bear to think of him!" I ejaculated aloud.

"Think of whom?" asked Madeline, turning quickly toward me.

Here was an awkward situation. The long speech of the ghost, to which Madeline paid no attention, but which I heard with perfect distinctness, had made me forget myself.

It was necessary to explain quickly. Of course, it would not do to admit that it was of her dear uncle that I was speaking; and so I mentioned hastily the first name I thought of.

"Mr. Vilars," I said.

This statement was entirely correct, for I never could bear to think of Mr. Vilars, who was a gentleman who had, at various times, paid much attention to Madeline.

"It is wrong for you to speak in that way of Mr. Vilars," she said. "He is a remarkably well-educated and sensible young man, and has very pleasant manners. He expects to be elected to the legislature this fall, and I should not be surprised if he made his mark. He will do well in a legislative body, for whenever Mr. Vilars has anything to say he knows just how and when to say it."

This was spoken very quietly, and without any show of resentment, which was all very natural, for if Madeline thought at all favourably of me she could not feel displeased that I should have disagreeable emotions in regard to a possible rival. The concluding words contained a hint which I was not slow to understand. I felt very sure that if Mr. Vilars were in my present position he would speak quickly enough.

"I know it is wrong to have such ideas about a person," I said, "but I cannot help it."

The lady did not chide me, and after this she seemed even in a softer mood. As for me, I felt considerably annoyed, for I had not wished to admit that any thought of Mr. Vilars had ever occupied my mind.

"You should not speak aloud that way," said the ghost, "or you may get yourself into trouble. I want to see everything go well with you, because then you may be disposed to help me, especially if I should chance to be of any assistance to you, which I hope I shall be."

I longed to tell him that there was no way in which he could help me so much as by taking his instant departure. To make love to a young lady with a ghost sitting on the railing near by, and that ghost the apparition of a much-dreaded uncle, the very idea of whom in such a position and at such a time made me tremble, was a difficult, if not an impossible, thing to do; but I forbore to speak, although I may have looked my mind.

"I suppose," continued the ghost, "that you have not heard anything that might be of advantage to me. Of course I am very anxious to hear, but if you have anything to tell me, I can wait until you are alone. I will come to you to-night in your room, or I will stay here until the lady goes away."

"You need not wait here," I said; "I have nothing at all to say to you."

Madeline sprang to her feet, her face flushed and her eyes ablaze.

"Wait here!" she cried. "What do you suppose I am waiting for? Nothing to say to me indeed!—I should think so! What should you have to say to me?"

"Madeline," I exclaimed, stepping toward her, "let me explain."

But she had gone.

Here was the end of the world for me! I turned fiercely to the ghost.

"Wretched existence!" I cried. "You have ruined everything. You have blackened my whole life. Had it not been for you——"

But here my voice faltered. I could say no more.

"You wrong me," said the ghost. "I have not injured you. I have tried only to encourage and assist you, and it is your own folly that has done this mischief. But do not despair. Such mistakes as these can be explained. Keep up a brave heart. Good-bye."

And he vanished from the railing like a bursting soap-bubble.

I went gloomily to bed, but I saw no apparitions that night except those of despair and misery which my wretched thoughts called up. The words I had uttered had sounded to Madeline like the basest insult. Of course there was only one interpretation she could put upon them.

As to explaining my ejaculations, that was impossible. I thought the matter over and over again as I lay awake that night, and I determined that I would never tell Madeline the facts of the case. It would be better for me to suffer all my life than for her to know that the ghost of her uncle haunted the house. Mr. Hinckman was away, and if she knew of his ghost she could not be made to believe that he was not dead. She might not survive the shock! No, my heart could bleed but I would never tell her.

The next day was fine, neither too cool nor too warm; the breezes were gentle, and Nature smiled. But there were no walks or rides with Madeline. She seemed to be much engaged during the day, and I saw but little of her. When we met at meals she was polite, but very quiet and reserved. She had evidently determined on a course of conduct, and had resolved to assume that, although I had been very rude to her, she did not understand the import of my words. It would be quite proper, of course, for her not to know what I meant by my expressions of the night before.

I was downcast and wretched, and said but little, and the only bright streak across the black horizon of my woe was the fact that she did not appear to be happy, although she affected an air of unconcern. The moonlit porch was deserted that evening, but wandering about the house I found Madeline in the library alone. She was reading, but I went in and sat down near her. I felt that, although I could not do so fully, I must in a measure explain my conduct of the night before. She listened quietly to a somewhat laboured apology I made for the words I had used.

"I have not the slightest idea what you meant," she said, "but you were very rude."

I earnestly disclaimed any intention of rudeness, and assured her, with a warmth of speech that must have made some impression upon her, that rudeness to her would be an action impossible to me. I said a great deal upon the subject, and implored her to believe that if it were not for a certain obstacle I could speak to her so plainly that she would understand everything.

She was silent for a time, and then she said, rather more kindly, I thought, than she had spoken before:

"Is that obstacle in any way connected with my uncle?"

"Yes," I answered, after a little hesitation, "it is, in a measure, connected with him."

She made no answer to this, and sat looking at her book, but not reading. From the expression of her face, I thought she was somewhat softened toward me. She knew her uncle as well as I did, and she may have been thinking that, if he were the obstacle that prevented my speaking (and there were many ways in which he might be that obstacle), my position would be such a hard one that it would excuse some wildness of speech and eccentricity of manner. I saw, too, that the warmth of my partial explanations had had some effect on her, and I began to believe that it might be a good thing for me to speak my mind without delay. No matter how she should receive my proposition, my relations with her could not be worse than they had been the previous night and day, and there was something in her face which encouraged me to hope that she might forget my foolish exclamations of the evening before if I began to tell her my tale of love.

I drew my chair a little nearer to her, and as I did so the ghost burst into the room from the doorway behind her. I say burst, although no door flew open and he made no noise. He was wildly excited, and waved his arms above his head. The moment I saw him, my heart fell within me. With the entrance of that impertinent apparition, every hope fled from me. I could not speak while he was in the room.

I must have turned pale, and I gazed steadfastly at the ghost, almost without seeing Madeline, who sat between us.

"Do you know," he cried, "that John Hinckman is coming up the hill? He will be here in fifteen minutes, and if you are doing anything in the way of love-making, you had better hurry it up. But this is not what I came to tell you. I have glorious news! At last I am transferred! Not forty minutes ago a Russian nobleman was murdered by the Nihilists. Nobody ever thought of him in connection with an immediate ghostship. My friends instantly applied for the situation for me, and obtained my transfer. I am off before that horrid Hinckman comes up the hill. The moment I reach my new position, I shall put off this hated semblance. Good-bye.

You can't imagine how glad I am to be, at last, the real ghost of somebody."

"Oh!" I cried, rising to my feet and stretching out my arms in utter wretchedness, "I would to heaven you were mine!"

"I *am* yours," said Madeline, raising to me her tearful eyes.

THE LADY, OR THE TIGER?

FRANK R. STOCKTON

IN the very olden time there lived a semi-barbaric king whose ideas, though somewhat polished and sharpened by the progressiveness of distant Latin neighbours, were still large, florid, and untrammelled, as became the half of him which was barbaric. He was a man of exuberant fancy, and, withal, of an authority so irresistible that, at his will, he turned his varied fancies into facts. He was greatly given to self-communing; and, when he and himself agreed upon anything, the thing was done. When every member of his domestic and political systems moved smoothly in its appointed course, his nature was bland and genial; but whenever there was a little hitch, and some of his orbs got out of their orbits, he was blander and more genial still, for nothing pleased him so much as to make the crooked straight, and crush down uneven places.

Among the borrowed notions by which his barbarism had become semified was that of the public arena, in which, by exhibitions of manly and beastly valour, the minds of his subjects were refined and cultured.

But even here the exuberant and barbaric fancy asserted itself. The arena of the king was built, not to give the people an opportunity of hearing the rhapsodies of dying gladiators, nor to enable them to view the inevitable conclusion of a conflict between religious opinions and hungry jaws, but for purposes far better adapted to widen and develop the mental energies of the people. This vast amphitheatre, with its encircling galleries, its mysterious vaults, and its unseen passages, was an agent of poetic justice, in which crime was punished, or virtue rewarded, by the decrees of an impartial and incorruptible chance.

When a subject was accused of a crime of sufficient importance to interest the king, public notice was given that on an appointed day the fate of the accused person would be decided in the king's arena,—a structure which well deserved its name; for, although its form and plan were borrowed from afar, its purpose emanated solely

from the brain of this man, who, every barleycorn a king, knew no tradition to which he owed more allegiance than pleased his fancy, and who ingrafted on every adopted form of human thought and action the rich growth of his barbaric idealism.

When all the people had assembled in the galleries, and the king, surrounded by his court, sat high up on his throne of royal state on one side of the arena, he gave a signal, a door beneath him opened, and the accused subject stepped out into the amphitheatre. Directly opposite him, on the other side of the enclosed space, were two doors, exactly alike and side by side. It was the duty and the privilege of the person on trial to walk directly to these doors and open one of them. He could open either door he pleased : he was subject to no guidance or influence but that of the aforementioned impartial and incorruptible chance. If he opened the one, there came out of it a hungry tiger, the fiercest and most cruel that could be procured, which immediately sprang upon him, and tore him to pieces, as a punishment for his guilt. The moment that the case of the criminal was thus decided, doleful iron bells were clanged, great wails went up from the hired mourners posted on the outer rim of the arena, and the vast audience, with bowed heads and downcast hearts, wended slowly their homeward way, mourning greatly that one so young and fair, or so old and respected, should have merited so dire a fate.

But, if the accused person opened the other door, there came forth from it a lady, the most suitable to his years and station that his majesty could select among his fair subjects ; and to this lady he was immediately married, as a reward of his innocence. It mattered not that he might already possess a wife and family, or that his affections might be engaged upon an object of his own selection ; the king allowed no such subordinate arrangements to interfere with his great scheme of retribution and reward. The exercises, as in the other instance, took place immediately, and in the arena. Another door opened beneath the king, and a priest, followed by a band of choristers, and dancing maidens blowing joyous airs on golden horns and treading an epithalamic measure, advanced to where the pair stood, side by side ; and the wedding was promptly and cheerily solemnised. Then the gay brass bells rang forth their merry peals, the people shouted glad hurrahs, and the innocent man, preceded by children strewing flowers on his path, led his bride to his home.

This was the king's semi-barbaric method of administering justice. Its perfect fairness is obvious. The criminal could not know out of which door would come the lady : he opened either he pleased, without having the slightest idea whether, in the next instant, he was to be devoured or married. On some occasions the tiger came out of one door, and on some out of the other. The decisions of this tribunal were not only fair, they were positively determinate : the accused person was instantly punished if he found himself guilty ; and, if innocent, he was rewarded on the spot, whether he liked it

or not. There was no escape from the judgments of the king's arena.

The institution was a very popular one. When the people gathered together on one of the great trial days, they never knew whether they were to witness a bloody slaughter or a hilarious wedding. This element of uncertainty lent an interest to the occasion which it could not otherwise have attained. Thus the masses were entertained and pleased, and the thinking part of the community could bring no charge of unfairness against this plan; for did not the accused person have the whole matter in his own hands?

This semi-barbaric king had a daughter as blooming as his most florid fancies, and with a soul as fervent and imperious as his own. As is usual in such cases, she was the apple of his eye, and was loved by him above all humanity. Among his courtiers was a young man of that fineness of blood and lowness of station common to the conventional heroes of romance who love royal maidens. This royal maiden was well satisfied with her lover, for he was handsome and brave to a degree unsurpassed in all this kingdom; and she loved him with an ardour that had enough of barbarism in it to make it exceedingly warm and strong. This love affair moved on happily for many months, until one day the king happened to discover its existence. He did not hesitate nor waver in regard to his duty in the premises. The youth was immediately cast into prison, and a day was appointed for his trial in the king's arena. This, of course, was an especially important occasion; and his majesty, as well as all the people, was greatly interested in the workings and development of this trial. Never before had such a case occurred; never before had a subject dared to love the daughter of a king. In after years such things became commonplace enough; but then they were, in no slight degree, novel and startling.

The tiger-cages of the kingdom were searched for the most savage and relentless beasts, from which the fiercest monster might be selected for the arena; and the ranks of maiden youth and beauty throughout the land were carefully surveyed by competent judges, in order that the young man might have a fitting bride in case fate did not determine for him a different destiny. Of course, everybody knew that the deed with which the accused was charged had been done. He had loved the princess, and neither he, she, nor any one else thought of denying the fact; but the king would not think of allowing any fact of this kind to interfere with the workings of the tribunal, in which he took such great delight and satisfaction. No matter how the affair turned out, the youth would be disposed of; and the king would take an aesthetic pleasure in watching the course of events, which would determine whether or not the young man had done wrong in allowing himself to love the princess.

The appointed day arrived. From far and near the people gathered, and thronged the great galleries of the arena; and crowds, unable to gain admittance, massed themselves against its outside

walls. The king and his court were in their places, opposite the twin doors—those fateful portals, so terrible in their similarity.

All was ready. The signal was given. A door beneath the royal party opened, and the lover of the princess walked into the arena. Tall, beautiful, fair, his appearance was greeted with a low hum of admiration and anxiety. Half the audience had not known so grand a youth had lived among them. No wonder the princess loved him! What a terrible thing for him to be there!

As the youth advanced into the arena, he turned, as the custom was, to bow to the king: but he did not think at all of that royal personage; his eyes were fixed upon the princess, who sat to the right of her father. Had it not been for the moiety of barbarism in her nature, it is probable that lady would not have been there; but her intense and fervid soul would not allow her to be absent on an occasion in which she was so terribly interested. From the moment that the decree had gone forth, that her lover should decide his fate in the king's arena, she had thought of nothing, night or day, but this great event and the various subjects connected with it. Possessed of more power, influence, and force of character than any one who had ever before been interested in such a case, she had done what no other person had done—she had possessed herself of the secret of the doors. She knew in which of the two rooms, that lay behind those doors, stood the cage of the tiger, with its open front, and in which waited the lady. Through these thick doors, heavily curtained with skins on the inside, it was impossible that any noise or suggestion should come from within to the person who should approach to raise the latch of one of them; but gold, and the power of a woman's will, had brought the secret to the princess.

And not only did she know in which room stood the lady ready to emerge, all blushing and radiant, should her door be opened, but she knew who the lady was. It was one of the fairest and lovelist of the damsels of the court who had been selected as the reward of the accused youth, should he be proved innocent of the crime of aspiring to one so far above him; and the princess hated her. Often had she seen, or imagined that she had seen, this fair creature throwing glances of admiration upon the person of her lover, and sometimes she thought these glances were perceived and even returned. Now and then she had seen them talking together; it was but for a moment or two, but much can be said in a brief space; it may have been on most unimportant topics, but how could she know that? The girl was lovely, but she had dared to raise her eyes to the loved one of the princess; and, with all the intensity of the savage blood transmitted to her through long lines of wholly barbaric ancestors, she hated the woman who blushed and trembled behind that silent door.

When her lover turned and looked at her, and his eye met hers as she sat there paler and whiter than any one in the vast ocean of

anxious faces about her, he saw, by that power of quick perception which is given to those whose souls are one, that she knew behind which door crouched the tiger, and behind which stood the lady. He had expected her to know it. He understood her nature, and his soul was assured that she would never rest until she had made plain to herself this thing, hidden to all other lookers-on, even to the king. The only hope for the youth in which there was any element of certainty was based upon the success of the princess in discovering this mystery; and the moment he looked upon her, he saw she had succeeded, as in his soul he knew she would succeed.

Then it was that his quick and anxious glance asked the question: "Which?" It was as plain to her as if he shouted it from where he stood. There was not an instant to be lost. The question was asked in a flash; it must be answered in another.

Her right arm lay on the cushioned parapet before her. She raised her hand, and made a slight, quick movement toward the right. No one but her lover saw her. Every eye but his was fixed on the man in the arena. He turned, and with a firm and rapid step he walked across the empty space. Every heart stopped beating, every breath was held, every eye was fixed immovably upon that man. Without the slightest hesitation he went to the door on the right and opened it.

Now, the point of the story is this: Did the tiger come out of that door, or did the lady? The more we reflect upon this question, the harder it is to answer. It involves a study of the human heart which leads us through devious mazes of passion, out of which it is difficult to find our way. Think of it, fair reader, not as if the decision of the question depended upon yourself, but upon that hot-blooded, semi-barbaric princess, her soul at a white heat beneath the combined fires of despair and jealousy. She had lost him, but who should have him?

How often, in her waking hours and in her dreams, had she started in wild horror, and covered her face with her hands as she thought of her lover opening the door on the other side of which waited the cruel fangs of the tiger!

But how much oftener had she seen him at the other door! How in her grievous reveries had she gnashed her teeth, and torn her hair, when she saw his start of rapturous delight as he opened the door of the lady? How her soul had burned in agony when she had seen him rush to meet that woman, with her flushing cheek and sparkling eye of triumph; when she had seen him lead her forth, his whole frame kindled with the joy of recovered life; when she had heard the glad shouts from the multitude, and the wild ringing of the happy bells; when she had seen the priest, with his joyous followers, advance to the couple, and make them man and wife before her very eyes; and when she had seen them walk away together upon

their path of flowers, followed by the tremendous shouts of the hilarious multitude, in which her one despairing shriek was lost and drowned!

Would it not be better for him to die at once, and go to wait for her in the blessed regions of semi-barbaric futurity?

And yet, that awful tiger, those shrieks, that blood!

Her decision had been indicated in an instant, but it had been made after days and nights of anguished deliberation. She had known she would be asked, she had decided what she would answer, and, without the slightest hesitation, she had moved her hand to the right.

The question of her decision is one not to be lightly considered, and it is not for me to presume to set myself up as the one person able to answer it. And so I leave it with all of you: Which came out of the opened door—the lady, or the tiger?

HARRIET PRESCOTT SPOFFORD

1835–1921

THE MOUNT OF SORROW

NEVER did anything seem fresher and sweeter than the plateau on which we emerged in the early sunset, after defiling all day through the dark deep mountain-sides in the rain.

We had promised Rhoda to assault her winter fastness whenever she should summon us ; and now, in obedience to her message, a gay party of us had left the railway, and had driven, sometimes in slushy snow and sometimes on bare ground, up the old mountain-road, laughing and singing, and jangling our bells, till at length the great bare woods, lifting their line for ever before us and above us, gave place to bald black mountain-sides, whose oppressive gloom and silence stifled everything but a longing to escape from between them, and from the possible dangers in crossing bridges, and fording streams swollen by the fortnight's thaws and rains. Now and then the stillness resolved itself into the murmuring of bare sprays, the rustling of rain, the dancing of innumerable unfettered brooks glittering with motion, but without light, from the dusky depths ; now and then a ghastly lustre shot from the ice still hanging like a glacier upon some upper steep, or a strange gleam from the sodden snow on their floors lightened the roofs of the leafless forests that overlapped the chasms, and trailed their twisted roots like shapes of living horror. What was there, I wondered, so darkly familiar in it all ? in what nightmare had I dreamed it all before ? Long ere the journey's end our spirits became dead as last night's wine ; we shared the depression of all nature, and felt as if we had come out of chaos and the end of all things when the huge mountain gates closed behind us, and we dashed out on the plateau where the grass, from which the wintry wrapping had been washed, had not lost all its greenness, and in the sudden lifting of the raincloud a red sparkle of sunset lighted the windows, as if a hundred flambeaux had been kindled to greet us.

A huge fire burned in the fireplace of the drawing-room when we had mounted the stairs and crossed the great hall, where other fires were blazing and sending ruddy flames to skim among the cedar rafters ; and all that part of the house sacred to Colonel Vorse, and opened now the first time in many winters, was thoroughly warm

and cheerful with lights and flowers and rugs and easy-chairs and books. We might easily have fancied ourselves, that night, in those spacious rooms, when, toilets made and dinner over, we reassembled around the solid glow of the chimney logs, a modern party in some old mediæval chamber, all the more for the spirit of the scene outside, where the storm was telling its rede again, rain changing to snow, and a cruel blast keening round the many gables and screaming down the chimneys. After all, Rhoda's and Merivale's plan of having us in the hills before late-lingering winter should be quite gone, and doing a little Sintram business with skates and wolves and hill visions, should have been carried out earlier. To them it was all but little less novel than it was to me, and Rhoda, who, although a year or two my junior, had been my intimate, so far as I ever had an intimate, would not rest till she had devised this party, without which she knew she could not have me, even persuading our good old Dr. Devens to leave his pulpit and people, and stamp the proceeding with his immaculate respectability. As it was, however, it looked as though we were simply to be shut in by a week of storm following the thaw. Well, there are compensations in all things: perhaps two people in whom I had some interest would know each other a trifle better before the week ended then.

The place was really the home of Rhoda and Merivale, or was now to become so. Colonel Vorse, their father, who had married so young that he felt but little older than they, and was quite their companion, was still the owner of the vast summer hostelry, although no longer its manager. After accumulating his fortune he had taken his children about the world, educating them and himself at the same time, with now an object lesson in Germany and now another in Peru, and finally returning to this place, which, so far as we could see, was absolute desolation, without a neighbour, but which to him was bristling with memories and associations and old friends across the intervale and over the mountain and round the spur. There was something weird to me, as I looked out at the flying whiteness of the moonlit storm, in those acquaintances of his among the hollows of these pallid hills; it seemed as though they must partake of the coldness and whiteness, and as if they were only dead people, when all was said. Perhaps Dr. Devens, who half the way up had been quoting,

> Pavilioned high, he sits
> In darkness from excessive splendour born,

had another phase of the same feeling. I heard him saying, as I passed him five minutes before, where he sat astride a chair in front of the long oriel casement: "There is a path which no fowl knoweth, and which the vulture's eye hath not seen: the lion's whelps have not trodden it, nor the fierce lion passed by it. He putteth forth his hand upon the rock; he overturneth the mountains

by the roots. He cutteth out rivers among the rocks ; and his eye seeth every precious thing. He bindeth the floods from overflowing ; and the thing that is hid bringeth he forth to light." He is expecting a convulsion of nature, I remember thinking, as I went by and paused at another window myself. A convulsion of nature ! I fancy that he found it.

" There is something eerie here," I said, as I still gazed at the scene ; for the dim gigantic shapes of the hills rose round us like sheeted ghosts, while the flying scud of the storm, filled with the white diffusion of unseen light, every now and then opened to let the glimpses out. " And see the witch-fires," as the rosy reflections of our burning logs and lights danced on the whirling snow without. " Is there anything wanting to make us feel as if we had been caught here by some spell, and were to be held by some charm ? "

" I wish I knew the charm," said Colonel Vorse, by my side, and half under his breath. And then I felt a little angrier with myself for coming than I had felt before.

" I often hear you talking of your belief in certain telluric forces that must have most power among the mountains where they first had play, and where earth is not only beneath, but is above you and around you. Well, we are here in the stronghold of these telluric forces. I am their old friend and ally : let me see what they will do for me."

It was true. And I half shivered with an indefinite fear that I might be compelled, in spite of all wish and prejudice, and birth-right—I, the child of proud old colonial grandees of the South ; he, the son of a mountain farmer, who had married a mate of his own degree, and had kept a mountain inn till fortune found him and death took her. My father at least was the child of those proud old colonials, and I had lived with his people and been reared on their traditions. Who my mother was I never knew ; for my father had married her in some romantic fashion—a runaway match—and she had died at my birth, and he had shortly followed her. I had nothing that belonged to her but the half of a broken miniature my father had once painted of her, as I understood. I always wore it, with I know not what secret sentiment, but I showed it to nobody. I had sometimes wondered about the other half, but my life had not left me much time for sentiment or wonder—full of gaiety till my grandfather's death left me homeless ; full of gaiety since his friend Mrs. Montresor had adopted me for child and companion, subject to her kind whims and tyrannies. But if she took me here and took me there, and clad me like a princess, I was none the less aware of the fact that I was without a penny—morbidly aware of it without doubt. But it disposed me to look with favour on no rich man's suit, and the lover as penniless as I and as fine as my ideal lover had not yet appeared. It made me almost hate the face and form, the colour, the hair, that they

dared to call Titianesque, speak of as if it were the free booty of pigment and canvas, and wish to drag captive in the golden chains of their wealth. When I had met Colonel Vorse, a year ago, twice my age though he was, he was the first one I had wished as poor as I—he the plebeian newly rich. Yet not so newly rich was he that he had not had time to become used to his riches, to see the kingdoms of the earth and weigh them in his balance, to serve his country on the battlefield, and his State in the council chamber ; and, for the rest, contact with the world is sadly educating.

" I often look at Colonel Vorse among the men born in the purple," said Mrs. Montresor once—she thought people born in the purple were simply those who had never earned their living—" and he is the superior of them all. What a country it is where a man keeping a common tavern in the first half of his life may make himself the equal of sovereigns in the other half ! I don't understand it ; he is the finest gentleman of them all. And he looks it. Don't you think so, Helena ? "

But I never told Mrs. Montresor what I thought. It is all very well to generalise and to be glad that certain institutions produce certain effects ; but of course you are superior to the institutions, or you wouldn't be generalising so, and all the more, of course, superior to the effects, and so I don't see how it signifies to you personally.

" You ought to have your head carried on a pike," said Mrs. Montresor again. " You will, if we ever have any *bonnets rouges* in America. You are the aristocrat pure and simple. The Princess Lamballe was nothing to you. You think humanity exists so that *nous autres*, by standing on it, may get the light and air. You are sure that you are made of different clay—the *canaille* of street mud, for instance, and you of the fine white stuff from which they mould Dresden china. You are quite a study to me, my love. I expect to see you marry a pavior yet, either one who lays down or one who tears up paving-stones." But I had only laughed again. She plumed herself on being cosmopolitan even to her principles.

" You give me credit for too much thinking on the subject." I said, " if it is credit. Indeed, I don't concern myself about such people ; and as for marrying one of them, I could as soon marry into a different race, African or Mongolian. They *are* a different race."

And I remembered all this as Colonel Vorse stood leaning his hand above me on the jamb of the window-frame—for although I was tall, he was a son of Anak—with that air which, never vaunting strength, always made you aware of its repression. I could fancy hearing Mrs. Montresor say, " That air of his ! it always fetches women ! " for she loved a little slang, by some antipodal attraction of her refinement, and I instinctively stiffened myself, determined it should never fetch *me*. And here he was calling his allies, the spirits and powers of the dark and terrible mountain heights and

depths, and openly giving battle. I don't know why it depressed me; I felt as if the very fact that it did was a half-surrender; I looked up at him a moment; I forgot who he was; I wished he was as poor as I. But to become the mother of Rhoda, my friend, and of Merivale, that laughing young giant—what absurdity, if all the rest were equal! And that other, the dead woman, the first wife—should one not always be jealous of that sweet early love? Could one endure it? Here among these hills with all their ghostliness she would haunt me. And then I turned and swept away to the fireside, holding out my hands to the flame, and glad to sink into the chair that some one had left empty there.

I hardly knew what world I was living in when, perhaps a half-hour later, I heard Colonel Vorse's voice. "The trouble is that men are *not* born free and equal," he was saying. "Free? They are hampered by inheritance and circumstance from the moment of birth. Equal? It is a self-evident lie. And the world has rhapsodised for a hundred years over so clumsy a statement. All men are born with equal rights. That is the precise statement. My rights—rights to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness—are equal to the rights of all the princelings of the earth; their rights equal only to mine. So far as they interfere with my rights they are public enemies, and are to be dealt with; and so far as I interfere with their rights, I am a trespasser to be punished. Otherwise, prince or peasant, each is a man, whether he wears a blouse or a star and garter; and if man was made in the image of God, let us do no indignity to that image in one or in another."

Did I understand him? Was Colonel Vorse proclaiming himself the equal of Prince San Sorcererino who had entertained us in his palaces last year? Well. And was he not? All at once something seemed to sift away from before my eyes—a veil that had hidden my kind from me. Was there no longer even that natural aristocracy in which Shakespeare or Homer or Dante was king? Was the world a brotherhood, and they the public enemy, the enemy of the great perfect race to come, who helped one brother take advantage of another? Were those ribbons in the buttonhole, the gifts of kings, of no more worth than the ribbons of cigars?

Mrs. Montresor was toying with her fan beside me, and talking in an undertone behind it. "What prince of all that you have seen or read of," said she, "if born on a meagre mountain farm, would have made his fortune and have educated himself as this man has done? I think the kings who founded races of kings were like him. And what prince of them all alike looks so much the prince as he? This one as fat as Falstaff and as low, that one with a hump on his back, the other without brains, the next with brains awry, and none of them made as becomes a man. Tell me, Helena?"

"I think you are in love yourself," I said.

She laughed. "As tall as Saul, as dark, as lordly in all propor-

tions, as gentle as Jonathan, and with a soul like David's—why shouldn't I be ? " she said. " And he not the equal of the granddaughter of a South Carolina planter ! Tell me again, Helena, what has she ever done to prove herself his equal ? "

She had had a fancy—Heaven knows why—that her young mother, who had run away with her father, was the daughter of a noble foreign family ; or else why should the match have been clandestine ? She had had a fancy that she was therefore noble, as her mother was—the mother even whose name her child did not know other than as the slaves had told her the young bridegroom called her Pansy because of a pair of purple-dark eyes. That was about all. That was all the answer I could have made, had I spoken, to her gentle raillery, half mockery, in which she did not quite believe herself. But even were it so, and the daughter noble as the mother, could blood that had filtered through generations of oppressors lounging in laps of luxury be pure as this blood that had informed none but simple and innocent lives, and seemed just now as if it had come fresh from the hands of the Maker ? I surveyed him from behind the hand-screen that failed to keep the ruddy flames from my face, and I felt him in that glance to be one of the sons of God, and I but one of the daughters of men. Again I did not tell Mrs. Montresor.

But the witch could always read my thoughts. " Still," she said, " he has kept a tavern. There is no getting round that fact by all the poetry in the world. Then why try to get round it ? He has furnished food and shelter to the tired and roofless—as noble a way to make money, surely, as working the bones and muscles of slaves, and accepting the gold they earn."

" That is the last I have of such gold," I cried, in a stifled way ; and I unclasped the old bracelet on my wrist and tossed it behind the back-log—people were too gaily engaged to observe us at the moment. " I think," I said then, turning upon her, " that you are employed as an advocate, unless—you are really weary of me."

" Weary of you ! " she exclaimed, half under her breath though it was—" weary of you, when you are such unceasing variety to me that if you married ten thousand tavern-keepers I should always have a room in the inn ! "

" Thank Heaven," I answered her gaily, " it is an impossibility that I should ever marry *one*." And then there was a lull in the laughter and the snatches of song and conversation on the other side of the room ; and while I was still gazing after my bracelet and into the chimney-place, where the flames wallowed about unhewn forest logs that took two men to cast to them, Colonel Vorse came over to us.

" You will turn into salamanders," he said.

" It is bad enough to be in hot water," said Mrs. Montresor lightly. " I will leave the fire to you and Helena."

"Where you sit," said Colonel Vorse then to me, "if you turn your head slightly to the left, and shade your eyes, you can see the side of the darkest and sternest of our mountains. You know we do not call our hills by the names they have in maps and Government surveys; the old settlers who first came here called this one, for unknown reasons of their own, the Mount of Sorrow. It has always been the Mount of Sorrow."

"An ominous name for so near a neighbour," I said.

"Ah! you think this region is oppressive, or perhaps dull and tame, without life or stir—desolate, in fact. What if I should tell you that it bubbles, like a caldron over the bottomless pit, with griefs and sins!—that in lives condemned to perpetual imprisonment on these bare rocks, feeding on themselves, traits intensifying the loneliness, the labour, the negation, slowly extract the juices of humanity, and make crime a matter to be whispered of among them? If they feel they are forgotten by God, what matters the murder or the suicide more or less that gives release? It is hell here or hell there: they are sure of this—they have it; the other may not come to pass."

"What do you mean?" I said, with white lips; for as he spoke it seemed as if I had come into a land of lepers. "Here in this white solitude, among lives fed from the primitive sources of nature and the dew of the morning——"

"I mean," he said, "that I refuse to accept the factitious aid your thoughts have lately been bringing to me. You see I have preternatural senses. Because I was born in the snows of the mountains I am no whit whiter than those born in the purlieus of the police stations of the cities. We are simply of the same human nature. When I win regard, it must be for no idle fancy, but for my own identity."

"Well," I said, "I do not believe you."

"Ah!" he replied, "have I gained a point, and found an advocate in an ideal of me? That would be as romantic as any of the romance of the hills. And there *is* romance here, whether it is born of crime, or of joy or of sorrow. There is romance enough on that old Mount of Sorrow that you see when the storm opens and strips it in that sudden white glory. Keep your eye, if you please, on a spot halfway up the sky, and when the apparition comes again you will find the dark outline of a dwelling there. It was a dwelling once; now it is only a ruin, hut and barn and byre. Why do you shudder? Do you see it? It is only a shadow. But a shadow with outlines black enough to defy the whitest blast that ever blew. Sometimes it seems to me as though that old ruin were itself a ghostly thing, a spectre of tragedies that will not down; for the avalanches divide and leave it, and the storms whistle over and beat against it, and it is always there when the sun rises. I don't know what it has to do with my fortunes; I don't know why it is a blotch upon the

face of nature to me ; but if ever I grow sad or sick at heart I feel as though I should be made whole again could that evil thing be removed.

" Why not remove it ? "

" It does not belong to me. I can do nothing with it. I am not sure that it belongs to any one—which adds to the spectral, you see—although I suppose there is somewhere a nameless heir. How restless you are ! " he said gently. " Will you come out in the long hall where the great window gives an unobstructed view of the thing, and walk off this nervousness ? The storm is lifting, I think ; the moon is going to overcome. One may see by the way the fire burns that the temperature is mounting. Perhaps we shall have a snow-slide as we walk."

Rhoda and Merivale were singing some of the songs they had learned since they came into the hill country, Mrs. Montresor was nodding behind her fan an accompaniment to Dr. Devens' remarks, Adèle was deep in her novel, and a flirtation and some portfolios of prints occupied the rest. To refuse was only to attract attention ; besides, I should like to walk. I rose and went out with him into the hall that shut off the wing from the great empty caravansary :

" And the long carpets rose along the gusty floor,"

I quoted as we walked ; and despite the fire burning on either side, he had brought me a fur for my shoulders.

" Yes," he said, " there comes the moon at last. Now you shall see the black and white of it."

" Oh ! " I cried, clasping my hands, as all the silvery lights and immense shadows burst out in a terrible sort of radiance. " The world began to be made here ! Poets should be born here ! "

" Instead of tavern-keepers," said he, " which brings me to my story. I am forty-three years old. Of course I was younger twenty-three years ago. That must have been not long before you came into the world yourself. Do you insist upon thinking twenty years' difference in age makes any disparity, except in the case of him who has lost just that twenty years' sweetness out of his life ? "

" I hardly see what that has to do with the story of the Mount of Sorrow," I said, as we turned from the window to measure the length of the hall again.

" I hope," said he, " that the suffrage reform, which is to admit women to the ballot, will never let them sit on the judicial bench, for mercy is foreign to the heart of a woman."

" Is it not a strange way of telling a story ? " I exclaimed.

" Patience ! " he laughed. " The story is so short it needs a little preface. As I was saying then, when I was twenty years old or so, the name of old Raynier, of the Mount of Sorrow, was a byword of terror through the region round, as the name of his father was, and his father before him. He had no other property than the sterile

farm half-way up the mountain, and almost inaccessible—in winter entirely inaccessible—where he raised not half a support on the slips of earth among the ledges; his few starved sheep and goats did what they could for him, and his rifle did the rest. The first Raynier of them all was possibly an escaped convict, who fortified his retreat by these mountain-sides. He had no money; the women spun and wove all that was worn. He had no education; no Raynier had ever had; no Raynier had ever had occasion to sign his mark, let alone his name. There had been one son in each generation; neither church nor school ever saw him; his existence was scarcely known till he was ready to marry, and then he came down, and by no one knows what other magic than a savage force of nature, took the prettiest girl of the valley to his eyrie—sometimes his wife sometimes not. When she died, and she always died, the Raynier of the day replaced her. He did not always wait for her to die before replacing her. But sudden deaths were no uncommon thing in that house; there was a burial-ground scooped in the hill-side. And who was there to interfere? Perhaps no one knew there had been a death till the year was out. What if a woman went mad? That happened anywhere. People below might prate of murder, or suicide, or slow poison; there was nobody to whom it was vital enough to open the question seriously; and then they feared the Raynier with an uncanny fear, as people fear a catamount in the woods, or the goblin of old wives' tales after dark. There were horrible stories of bouts and brawls, of tortures, gags, whips, and—oh, no matter! Nor was all the crime on the shoulders of the Raynier men. It was understood that more than one woman of the name found life too intolerable to endure its conditions when the fumes of a charcoal fire after a drunken feast, or a quick thrust over the edge of a precipice, or a bit of weed in the broth, made life easier, till remorse brought madness. And finally, if any Raynier died what may be called a natural death, it was either from starvation or from delirium tremens. You see they were a precious lot."

"A precious lot!" I said, trembling. "Ah, what is heaven made of? Poor wretches, they could not help it. From generation to generation the children of such people must needs be criminal."

"I don't know. If removed from such influence. To my mind environment is strong as heredity, quite as strong. It destroys the old and creates the new. However, environment and heredity worked together up there. In my day—to continue—the Raynier family was larger than usual. The last wife still lived, a miserable cowed creature, white as ashes, face and hair and bleached scared eyes, eyes that looked as if they saw phantoms rather than people. Her mind was partially gone. I was a famous mountaineer then, and climbing wherever foot of man had been before, I once in a while came upon some or other of that family, and sometimes paused at the door, where I had first to teach the bloodhounds a

lesson. I never entered the filthy place but once. There were two sons and a daughter. Oh, how immortally beautiful that girl was! Such velvet darkness in the eye, such statuesque lines, such rose-leaf colour, such hair—'hair like the thistledown tinted with gold,' as John Mills, the Scotch poet-player, sang. The old man Raynier worshipped her, perhaps as a wild beast loves its whelp. But he had all sorts of fanciful names for her, Heart's-ease and Heart's Delight, and Violet and Rose and Lily. He grew almost gentle when he spoke to her; and he never knew that she was feeble-minded. She just missed being an imbecile. Perhaps you would not have known that all at once; you might not have found it out at all only meeting her casually. The old man Raynier sent her down to school—the first that had ever been there: she could never learn to read. She could not always tell her name. Still, her mind was innocent—perhaps because it was a blank. I have sometimes thought that blank mind of hers may have been a dead-wall through which the vices of her forebears could not pass, and so her children, if she had them, may have escaped the inheritance, and found a chance for good again, as if crime should at last estop itself. That may be."

"Oh, I think this is terrible!" I said, as we turned again in our walk. "Make haste, please, and be through."

"Yes it is. But I would show you that life can be anything but commonplace in this wilderness. Well, blank or not, she had a lover, who had found her out in his sketching rambles, a young painter from some distant parts, and the first boarder I ever had, by the way. And all the Rayniers swore they would have his life sooner than he should have her. One day I had been hunting on old Mount Sorrow, as it happened; there had been a sudden frost following rain that had frozen the water in the cracks of the cliffs, and made the way not only slippery, but dangerous; for in the heat of the noon sun the ice was melting, and every now and then its expansion was rending some fragment of rock so that your footing might vanish from beneath, or some shower of stones come rattling down from above; and I was tired when I reached the Raynier place, led by a blaze of maple boughs that started out like torches to show the way, and stopped to rest. I looked up at an enormous shelf of rock, half clad with reddened vines that fluttered like pestilence flags—a shelf that, although some hundred feet or so away from it, yet overhung the place and cast a perpetual shadow there. I wondered then why Nature had no secret springs of feeling to thrill her and cause her to rend the rocks and cover such a den of iniquity as we all held the spot to be. But Nature was just as fair that ambrosial September day as if there was not a dissonance. Perhaps she knew the right of the Rayniers to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. A delicious scent of the balsam from the pines filled the air, the sunshine swept over the hills below in waves

of light, and the hills themselves were like waves of a golden green and purple sea where now and then a rainbow swam and broke. Peace and perfectness, I said, peace and perfectness. These people live and are happy. On the other side one looked into the dreary defile of the mountain gate, with its black depths hung with cloud, and remembered that if there was not a hell, there ought to be. I was thinking this as I sat there, when I heard a wild cry, an agonized shriek, blood-curdling, repeated and repeated from within. It was the girl's voice. I was on my feet, and, in spite of the blood-hounds, making for the spot and among the crew. The old woman cowered in the corner, the two brothers held the girl, the old man towered over her, his great eyes blazing in his ashen face. I can't tell you what they were doing. Sometimes I have thought old Raynier was burning her with a hot iron he held——"

"Oh, horrible! horrible!"

"Burning her with a hot iron to make her give up her lover! Sometimes I have thought he was only demolishing the little likenesses of him and of herself, which that lover had painted, and which she cherished, perhaps as his work, perhaps for the unwonted gewgaw of the slender golden frame, for the one picture was already in fragments, and although she clutched half of the other, the broken half had fallen and rolled away. I have it somewhere. I will show it to you. I had no time, indeed, to see what it was they were doing, for behind me bounded that lover like a whirlwind, thrust one brother and the other aside, seized the girl, darted over the door-sill with her, and down the crags of the mountain path. He should have what help I could give. I was after him, stooping to catch up the fragment of painting as I turned, down the cliff's edge, they following. And all at once I stopped as if paralysed to the marrow by a clap of thunder, and turned my head to see the old man with his white hair streaming, and his arms uplifted in his cursing, as he came leaping on, and the next moment the shelf of overhanging rock had fallen, had cleft the house in twain, and mother and father and sons and hounds were dust with the dust flying over the precipices. I saw it."

"Oh!" I cried, with my hands over my eyes. "Why did it not strike you blind?"

"And here," said Colonel Vorse, leading my steps to an old cabinet in an alcove, "ought to be the half of that little likeness I picked up as I ran. I wonder what became of the other half—what became of the girl—if the lover married her—if she knew enough to know he didn't marry her—if she lived long enough for him to find out she was a fool—if she was the last of the Rayniers?" As he ceased, he put the half of the little miniature into my hands.

It was a broken bit of ivory, and on it the upper part of a face, sketchily done, with pansy-dark eyes and blush-rose skin—without a frame. I had the frame.

A heart-beat, a fluttering breath, a reeling sense of the world staggering away from me, and then my bewildered senses were at work again, and an agony like death was cutting me to the heart as we resumed our walking.

Should I tell him? Should I go on with my secret, my inheritance, my curse, and let no man know? If it ate out my heart, the sooner to end; my heart was broken now. Never, never now could fireside shine for me, could lover's lips be mine, could little faces sun themselves in my smile.

We paused before the great window, with those vague white shapes before us, for my feet would not obey me, and the light behind us shone on the bit of ivory. If I told him, it would be easier for him to bear; he would see the impossibility, he would desire my love no longer. My fearful inheritance would yawn like a gulf between us with its impassable darkness.

"And the ruin on the hill-side is an eyesore," I said. "But it is easy to remove it. I suppose it belongs to me. For—look here—it is I who must be the last of the Rayniers." And I drew from my breast the broken thing, the halved miniature, that in my mock sentiment I had worn so long.

"You!" cried he. "You!" And his feet tottered, and he leaned against the casement for support—he who an hour or so ago had seemed so full of repressed strength that he could have pulled his house down about his ears. Well, had he not done so?

I moved to his side, and held the thing that he might see where the pieces matched, the line of the cheek flowing into the lovely curve of the chin, the flickering sweetness of the lovely mouth, the lambent glance of the lovely eye. "It is my mother, you see," I said. "And it needs no words to say it."

"It needs no words to say it," he repeated hoarsely. "It is your image. Oh, my God! What have I done! what have I done! My darling, my darling, you must let me repair it by a lifetime of devotion." And he had his arms about me, and was drawing me to his heaving breast, his throbbing heart.

"No! no! no!" I sobbed. "It is impossible. I am wrecked; I am ruined; I can be no man's wife. You see yourself—I will never——" But his lips were silencing mine, and I lay there with those arms about me a moment; I lay there like one in heaven suspended over hell.

"What do I care," he whispered, "for all the Rayniers in Christendom or out of it, but you? I have learned in this moment that you love me! I will never give you up."

"You must," I groaned.

"I tell you I never will," he said, his voice husky and low and trembling, but his eye and his grasp firm. "I have assured you that environment, education, art, can supplement nature and heredity. They have done so with you. You are your father's child. You

received from your mother only the vital spark, only this beauty, this fatal beauty. If you inherited all that the Rayniers ever had, then I love, I love, I love all that the Rayniers ever were, for I love you. I have your love, Helena, and I will never let you go." While speaking he had touched the bell at his hand, and now he sent the answering servant for Dr. Devens, who came at once, supposing some sight of the snow was in store.

"Bid them all out here, Doctor," cried Colonel Vorse. "Ah, here they come! In this part of the country we need no licence for marriage. Here are a bride and groom awaiting your blessing. Perform your office, sir." And before I could summon heart or voice, making no response, bewildered and faint, I was the wife of Colonel Vorse, and my husband's arms were supporting me as the words of the prayer and benediction rolled over us.

"There is no time like the present," he cried gaily, his tones no longer broken, "as I have always found." And suddenly, before he ceased, and while they all thronged round me, there came a sharp strange sigh singing through the air, that grew into the wild discordant music of multitudinous echoes, and we all turned and sprang intuitively to see, rent in the moonlight and sheathed in the glorious spray of a thousand ice-falls, the Mount of Sorrow bow its head and come down, and, while the whole earth shook and smoked back in hoar vapours, the great snow-slide, in its swift sheeting splendour, flash and wipe out before our eyes the last timber of the hut and barn and byre of the Rayniers.

MARK TWAIN
(Samuel Langhorne Clemens)
1835–1910

THE CELEBRATED JUMPING FROG OF CALAVERAS COUNTY

In compliance with the request of a friend of mine, who wrote me from the East, I called on good-natured, garrulous old Simon Wheeler, and inquired after my friend's friend, *Leonidas W.* Smiley, as requested to do, and I hereunto append the result. I have a lurking suspicion that *Leonidas W.* Smiley is a myth; that my friend never knew such a personage; and that he only conjectured that, if I asked old Wheeler about him, it would remind him of his infamous *Jim* Smiley, and he would go to work and bore me nearly to death with some infernal reminiscence of him as long and tedious as it should be useless for me. If that was the design, it certainly succeeded.

I found Simon Wheeler dozing comfortably by the bar-room stove of the old, dilapidated tavern in the ancient mining camp of Angel's, and I noticed that he was fat and bald-headed, and had an expression of winning gentleness and simplicity upon his tranquil countenance. He roused up and gave me good-day. I told him a friend of mine had commissioned me to make some inquiries about a cherished companion of his boyhood named *Leonidas W.* Smiley—*Rev. Leonidas W.* Smiley—a young minister of the Gospel, who he had heard was at one time a resident of Angel's Camp. I added that, if Mr. Wheeler could tell me anything about this Rev. Leonidas W. Smiley, I would feel under many obligations to him.

Simon Wheeler backed me into a corner and blockaded me there with his chair, and then sat me down and reeled off the monotonous narrative which follows this paragraph. He never smiled, he never frowned, he never changed his voice from the gentle-flowing key to which he tuned the initial sentence, he never betrayed the slightest suspicion of enthusiasm; but all through the interminable narrative there ran a vein of impressive earnestness and sincerity, which showed me plainly that, so far from his imagining that there was

anything ridiculous or funny about his story, he regarded it as a really important matter, and admired its two heroes as men of transcendent genius in *finesse*. To me the spectacle of a man drifting serenely along through such a queer yarn without ever smiling was exquisitely absurd. As I said before, I asked him to tell me what he knew of Rev. Leonidas W. Smiley, and he replied as follows. I let him go on in his own way, and never interrupted him once:

There was a feller here once by the name of *Jim* Smiley, in the winter of '49—or may be it was the spring of '50—I don't recollect exactly, somehow, though what makes me think it was one or the other is because I remember the big flume wasn't finished when he first came to the camp; but any way he was the curiosest man about, always betting on anything that turned up you ever see, if he could get anybody to bet on the other side; and if he couldn't, he'd change sides. Any way that suited the other man would suit him—any way just so's he got a bet, *he* was satisfied. But still he was lucky, uncommon lucky; he most always come out winner. He was always ready and laying for a chance; there couldn't be no solitry thing mentioned but that feller'd offer to bet on it, and take any side you please, as I was just telling you. If there was a horse-race, you'd find him flush, or you'd find him busted at the end of it; if there was a dog-fight, he'd bet on it; if there was a cat-fight, he'd bet on it; if there was a chicken-fight, he'd bet on it; why, if there was two birds sitting on a fence, he would bet you which one would fly first; or if there was a camp-meeting, he would be there reg'lar, to bet on Parson Walker, which he judged to be the best exhorter about here, and so he was, too, and a good man. If he even seen a straddle-bug start to go anywheres, he would bet you how long it would take him to get wherever he was going to, and if you took him up, he would foller that straddle-bug to Mexico but what he would find out where he was bound for and how long he was on the road. Lots of the boys here has seen that Smiley, and can tell you about him. Why, it never made no difference to *him*—he would bet on *any* thing—the dangdest feller. Parson Walker's wife laid very sick once, for a good while, and it seemed as if they warn't going to save her; but one morning he come in, and Smiley asked how she was, and he said she was considerable better—thank the Lord for His inf'nit mercy—and coming on so smart that, with the blessing of Prov'dence, she'd get well yet; and Smiley, before he thought, says, "Well, I'll risk two-and-a-half that she don't, anyway."

This-yer Smiley had a mare—the boys called her the fifteen-minute nag, but that was only in fun, you know, because, of course, she was faster than that—and he used to win money on that horse, for all she was so slow and always had the asthma, or the distemper, or the consumption, or something of that kind. They used to give her two or

three hundred yards' start, and then pass her under way ; but always at the fag-end of the race she'd get excited and desperate-like, and come cavorting and straddling up, and scattering her legs around limber, sometimes in the air, and sometimes out to one side amongst the fences, and kicking up m-o-r-e dust, and raising m-o-r-e racket with her coughing and sneezing and blowing her nose—and always fetch up at the stand just about a neck ahead, as near as you could cipher it down.

And he had a little small bull pup, that to look at him you'd think he wan't worth a cent, but to set around and look ornery, and lay for a chance to steal something. But as soon as the money was up on him, he was a different dog ; his under-jaw'd begin to stick out like the fo'castle of a steamboat, and his teeth would uncover, and shine savage like the furnaces. And a dog might tackle him, and bully-rag him, and bite him, and throw him over his shoulder two or three times, and Andrew Jackson—which was the name of the pup—Andrew Jackson would never let on but what *he* was satisfied, and hadn't expected nothing else—and the bets being doubled and doubled on the other side all the time, till the money was all up ; and then all of a sudden he would grab that other dog jest by the j'int of his hind leg and freeze to it—not chaw, you understand, but only jest grip and hang on till they throwed up the sponge, if it was a year. Smiley always come out winner on that pup, till he harnessed a dog once that didn't have no hind legs, because they'd been sawed off by a circular saw, and when the thing had gone along far enough, and the money was all up, and he come to make a snatch for his pet holt, he saw in a minute how he'd been imposed on, and how the other dog had him in the door, so to speak, and he 'peared surprised, and then he looked sorter discouraged-like, and didn't try no more to win the fight, and so he got shucked out bad. He give Smiley a look, as much as to say his heart was broke, and it was *his* fault, for putting up a dog that hadn't no hind legs for him to take holt of, which was his main dependence in a fight, and then he limped off a piece and laid down and died. It was a good pup, was that Andrew Jackson, and would have made a name for hisself if he'd lived, for the stuff was in him, and he had genius—I know it, because he hadn't had no opportunities to speak of, and it don't stand to reason that a dog could make such a fight as he could under them circumstances, if he hadn't no talent. It always makes me feel sorry when I think of that last fight of his'n, and the way it turned out.

Well, this-yer Smiley had rat-tarriers, and chicken cocks, and tomcats, and all them kind of things, till you couldn't rest, and you couldn't fetch nothing for him to bet on but he'd match you. He ketched a frog one day, and took him home, and said he cal'klated to edercate him ; and so he never done nothing for three months but set in his back yard and learn that frog to jump. And you bet

you he *did* learn him, too. He'd give him a little punch behind, and the next minute you'd see that frog whirling in the air like a doughnut—see him turn one somerset, or may be a couple, if he got a good start, and come down flat-footed and all right, like a cat. He got him up so in the matter of catching flies, and kept him in practice so constant, that he'd nail a fly every time as far as he could see him. Smiley said all a frog wanted was education, and he could do most anything—and I believe him. Why, I've seen him set Dan'l Webster down here on this floor—Dan'l Webster was the name of the frog—and sing out, "Flies, Dan'l, flies!" and quicker'n you could wink, he's spring straight up, and snake a fly off'n the counter there, and flop down on the floor again as solid as a gob of mud, and fall to scratching the side of his head with his hind foot as indifferent as if he hadn't no idea he'd been doin' any more'n any frog might do. You never see a frog so modest and straight for'ard as he was, for all he was so gifted. And when it come to fair and square jumping on a dead level, he could get over more ground at one straddle than any animal of his breed you ever see. Jumping on a dead level was his strong suit, you understand; and when it come to that, Smiley would ante up money on him as long as he had a red. Smiley was monstrous proud of his frog, and well he might be, for fellers that had travelled and been everywheres, all said he laid over any frog that ever *they* see.

Well, Smiley kept the beast in a little lattice box, and he used to fetch him down town sometimes and lay for a bet. One day a feller—a stranger in the camp, he was—come across him with his box, and says:

"What might it be that you've got in the box?"

And Smiley says, sorter indifferent like, "It might be a parrot, or it might be a canary, may be, but it ain't—it's only just a frog."

And the feller took it, and looked at it careful, and turned it round this way and that, and says, "H'm, so 'tis. Well, what's *he* good for?"

"Well," Smiley says, easy and careless, "he's good enough for *one* thing, I should judge—he can out-jump ary frog in Calaveras county."

The feller took the box again, and took another long, particular look, and give it back to Smiley, and says, very deliberate, "Well, I don't see no p'ints about that frog that's any better'n any other frog."

"May be you don't," Smiley says. "May be you understand frogs, and may be you don't understand 'em; may be you've had experience, and may be you ain't, only a amature, as it were. Any ways, I've got *my* opinion, and I'll risk forty dollars that he can outjump any frog in Calaveras county."

And the feller studied a minute, and then says, kinder sad like, "Well, I'm only a stranger here, and I ain't got no frog; but if I had a frog, I'd bet you."

And then Smiley says, "That's all right—that's all right—if you'll hold my box a minute, I'll go and get you a frog." And so the feller took the box, and put up his forty dollars along with Smiley's and set down to wait.

So he set there a good while thinking and thinking to hisself, and then he got the frog out and prized his mouth open and took a teaspoon and filled him full of quail shot—filled him pretty near up to his chin—and set him on the floor. Smiley he went to the swamp and slopped around in the mud for a long time, and finally be ketched a frog, and fetched him in, and give him to this feller, and says:

"Now, if you're ready, set him alongside of Dan'l, with his forepaws just even with Dan'l, and I'll give the word." Then he says, "One—two—three—jump!" and him and the feller touched up the frogs from behind, and the new frog hopped off, but Dan'l give a heave, and hysted up his shoulders—so—like a Frenchman, but it wan't no use—he couldn't budge; he was planted as solid as an anvil, and he couldn't no more stir than if he was anchored out. Smiley was a good deal surprised, and he was disgusted too, but he didn't have no idea what the matter was, of course.

The feller took the money and started away; and when he was going out at the door, he sorter jerked his thumb over his shoulders—this way—at Dan'l, and says again, very deliberate, "Well, I don't see no p'ints about that frog that's any better'n any other frog."

Smiley he stood scratching his head and looking down at Dan'l a long time, and at last he says, "I do wonder what in the nation that frog throw'd off for—I wonder if there ain't something the matter with him—he 'pears to look mightly baggy, somehow." And he ketched Dan'l by the nap of the neck, and lifted him up and says, "Why, blame my cats, if he don't weigh five pound!" and turned him upside down, and he belched out a double handful of shot. And then he see how it was, and he was the maddest man—he set the frog down and took out after that feller, but he never ketched him. And——

(Here Simon Wheeler heard his name called from the front yard, and got up to see what was wanted.) And turning to me as he moved away, he said: "Just set where you are, stranger, and rest easy—I an't going to be gone a second."

But, by your leave, I did not think that a continuation of the history of the enterprising vagabond *Jim* Smiley would be likely to afford me much information concerning the Rev. *Leonidas W.* Smiley, and so I started away.

At the door I met the sociable Wheeler returning, and he buttonholed me and recommenced:

"Well, this-yer Smiley had a yaller one-eyed cow that didn't have no tail, only just a short stump like a bannanner, and——"

"Oh, hang Smiley and his afflicted cow!" I muttered good-naturedly, and bidding the old gentleman good-day, I departed.

THE MAN WHO PUT UP AT GADSBY'S

MARK TWAIN

WHEN my old friend Riley and I were newspaper correspondents in Washington, in the winter of '67, we were coming down Pennsylvania Avenue one night, near midnight, in a driving storm of snow, when the flash of a street-lamp fell upon a man who was eagerly tearing along in the opposite direction. This man instantly stopped, and exclaimed :

" This is lucky ! You are Mr. Riley, ain't you ? "

Riley was the most self-possessed and solemnly deliberative person in the republic. He stopped, looked his man over from head to foot, and finally said :

" I am Mr. Riley. Did you happen to be looking for me ? "

" That's just what I was doing," replied the man joyously, " and it's the biggest luck in the world that I've found you. My name is Lykins. I'm one of the teachers of the high school, San Francisco. As soon as I heard the San Francisco postmastership was vacant, I made up my mind to get it ; and here I am."

" Yes," said Riley slowly, " as you have remarked, . . . Mr. Lykins, . . . here you are. And have you got it ? "

" Well, not exactly *got* it, but the next thing to it. I've brought a petition, signed by the Superintendent of Public Instruction, and all the teachers, and by more than two hundred other people. Now I want you, if you'll be so good, to go around with me to the Pacific delegation, for I want to rush this thing through and get along home."

" If the matter is so pressing, you will prefer that we visit the delegation to-night," said Riley, in a voice that had nothing mocking in it—to an unaccustomed ear.

" Oh, to-night, by all means ! I haven't got any time to fool around. I want their promise before I go to bed : I ain't the talking kind, I'm the *doing* kind."

" Yes, . . . you've come to the right place for that. When did you arrive ? "

" Just an hour ago."

" When are you intending to leave ? "

" For New York to-morrow evening—for San Francisco next morning."

" Just so. . . . What are you going to do to-morrow ? "

" *Do !* Why, I've got to go to the President with the petition and the delegation, and get the appointment, haven't I ? "

" Yes, . . . very true ; . . . that is correct. And then what ? "

" Executive session of the Senate at two P.M.,—got to get the appointment confirmed,—I reckon you'll grant that ? "

" Yes, . . . yes," said Riley meditatively, " you are right again. Then you take the train for New York in the evening, and the steamer for San Francisco next morning ? "

" That's it,—that's the way I map it out."

Riley considered awhile, and then said :

" You couldn't stay . . . a day . . . well, say two days longer ? "

" Bless your soul, no ! It's not my style. I ain't a man to go fooling around ;—I'm a man that *does* things, I'll tell you."

The storm was raging, the thick snow blowing in gusts. Riley stood silent, apparently deep in a reverie, during a minute or more, then he looked up and said : " Have you ever heard about that man who put up at Gadsby's once ? . . . But I see you haven't."

He backed Mr. Lykins against an iron fence, button-holed him, fastened him with his eye, like the Ancient Mariner, and proceeded to unfold his narrative as placidly and peacefully as if we were all stretched comfortably in a blossomy summer meadow instead of being persecuted by a wintry midnight tempest.

" I will tell you about that man. It was in Jackson's time. Gadsby's was the principal hotel, then. Well, this man arrived from Tennessee about nine o'clock, one morning, with a black coachman and a splendid four-horse carriage, and an elegant dog, which he was evidently fond and proud of ; he drove up before Gadsby's and the clerk and the landlord and everybody rushed out to take charge of him, but he said, 'Never mind,' and jumped out and told the coachman to wait—said he hadn't time to take anything to eat, he only had a little claim against the Government to collect, would run across the way, to the Treasury, and fetch the money, and then get right along back to Tennessee, for he was in considerable of a hurry.

" Well, about eleven o'clock that night he came back and ordered a bed and told them to put the horses up—said he would collect the claim in the morning. This was in January, you understand—January, 1834—the 3rd of January—Wednesday.

" Well, on the 5th of February he sold the fine carriage and bought a cheap second-hand one—said it would answer just as well to take the money home in, and he didn't care for style.

" On the 11th of August he sold a pair of the fine horses—said he'd often thought a pair was better than four, to go over the rough mountain-roads with, where a body had to be careful about his driving—and there wasn't so much of his claim but he could lug the money home with a pair easy enough.

"On the 13th of December he sold another horse—said two weren't necessary to drag that old light vehicle with—in fact, one could snatch it along faster than was absolutely necessary, now that it was good solid winter weather, and the roads in splendid condition.

"On the 17th of February, 1835, he sold the old carriage and bought a cheap second-hand buggy—said a buggy was just the trick to skim along mushy, slushy early-spring roads with, and he had always wanted to try a buggy on those mountain-roads, anyway.

"On the 1st of August he sold the buggy and bought the remains of an old sulky—said he just wanted to see those green Tennesseans stare when they saw him come a-ripping along in a sulky; didn't believe they'd ever heard of a sulky in their lives.

"Well, on the 29th of August he sold his coloured coachman—said he didn't need a coachman for a sulky—wouldn't be room enough for two in it, anyway—and said it wasn't every day that Providence sent a man a fool who was willing to pay nine hundred dollars for such a third-rate negro as that—been wanting to get rid of the creature for years, but didn't like to *throw* him away.

"Eighteen months later—that is to say, on the 15th of February, 1837—he sold the sulky and bought a saddle—said horseback-riding was what the doctor had always recommended *him* to take, and dog'd if he wanted to risk *his* neck going over those mountain-roads on wheels in the dead of winter, not if he knew himself.

"On the 9th of April he sold the saddle—said he wasn't going to risk *his* life with any perishable saddle-girth that ever was made, over a rainy, miry April road, while he could ride bareback and know and feel he was safe; always *had* despised to ride on a saddle, anyway.

"On the 24th of April he sold his horse—said 'I'm just fifty-seven to-day, hale and hearty—it would be a *pretty* howdy-do for me to be wasting such a trip as that, and such weather as this, on a horse, when there ain't anything in the world so splendid as a tramp on foot through the fresh spring woods and over the cheery mountains, to a man that *is* a man; and I can make my dog carry my claim in a little bundle anyway, when it's collected. So to-morrow I'll be up bright and early, make my little old collection, and mosey off to Tennessee, on my own hind legs, with a rousing good-bye to Gadsby's.'

"On the 22nd of June he sold his dog, said, 'Dern a dog, anyway, where you're just starting off on a rattling bully pleasure-tramp through the summer woods and hills—perfect nuisance—chases the squirrels, barks at everything, goes a-capering and splattering around in the fords—man can't get any chance to reflect and enjoy nature—and I'd a blamed sight rather carry the claim myself, it's a mighty sight safer; a dog's mighty uncertain in a financial way—always noticed it—well, good-bye, boys—last call—I'm off for Tennessee with a good leg and a gay heart, early in the morning.'"

There was a pause and a silence—except the noise of the wind and the pelting snow. Mr. Lykins said impatiently: "Well?"

Riley said: "Well, that was thirty years ago."

"Very well, very well: what of it?"

"I'm great friends with that old patriarch. He comes every evening to tell me good-bye. I saw him an hour ago: he's off for Tennessee early to-morrow morning—as usual; said he calculated to get his claim through and be off before night-owls like me have turned out of bed. The tears were in his eyes, he was so glad he was going to see his old Tennessee and his friends once more."

Another silent pause. The stranger broke it: "Is that all?"

"That is all."

"Well, for the *time* of night, and the *kind* of night, it seems to me the story was full long enough. But what's it all for?"

"Oh, nothing in particular."

"Well, where's the point of it?"

"Oh, there isn't any particular point to it. Only, if you are not in *too* much of a hurry to rush off to San Francisco with that post-office appointment, Mr. Lykins, I'd advise you to '*put up at Gadsby's*' for a spell, and take it easy. Good-bye. *God* bless you!"

So saying, Riley blandly turned on his heel and left the astonished school-teacher standing there, a musing and motionless snow image shining in the broad glow of the street-lamp.

He never got that post-office.

THOMAS BAILEY ALDRICH

1836–1907

MARJORIE DAW

I

Dr. Dillon to Edward Delaney, Esq., at The Pines, near Rye, N.H.

August 8, 187–.

My dear Sir—I am happy to assure you that your anxiety is without reason. Flemming will be confined to the sofa for three or four weeks, and will have to be careful at first how he uses his leg. A fracture of this kind is always a tedious affair. Fortunately the bone was very skilfully set by the surgeon who chanced to be in the drug-store where Flemming was brought after his fall, and I apprehend no permanent inconvenience from the accident *Flemming is doing perfectly well physically;* but I must confess that the irritable and morbid state of mind into which he has fallen causes me a great deal of uneasiness. He is the last man in the world who ought to break his leg. You know how impetuous our friend is ordinarily, what a soul of restlessness and energy, never content unless he is rushing at some object, like a sportive bull at a red shawl; but amiable withal. He is no longer amiable. His temper has become something frightful. Miss Fanny Flemming came up from Newport, where the family are staying for the summer, to nurse him; but he packed her off the next morning in tears. He has a complete set of Balzac's works, twenty-seven volumes, piled up by his sofa, to throw at Watkins whenever that exemplary serving-man appears with his meals. Yesterday I very innocently brought Flemming a small basket of lemons. You know it was a strip of lemon-peel on the kerbstone that caused our friend's mischance. Well, he no sooner set his eyes upon these lemons than he fell into such a rage as I cannot describe adequately. This is only one of his moods, and the least distressing. At other times he sits with bowed head regarding his splintered limb, silent, sullen, despairing. When this fit is on him—and it sometimes lasts all day—nothing can distract his melancholy. He refuses to eat; does not even read the newspapers; books—except as projectiles for Watkins—have no charms for him. His state is truly pitiable.

Now, if he were a poor man, with a family dependent on his daily

labour, this irritability and despondency would be natural enough. But in a young fellow of twenty-four, with plenty of money, and seemingly not a care in the world, the thing is monstrous. If he continues to give way to his vagaries in this manner, he will end by bringing on an inflammation of the fibula. It was the fibula he broke. I am at my wits' end to know what to prescribe for him. I have anæsthetics and lotions to make people sleep and to soothe pain; but I've no medicine that will make a man have a little common-sense. That is beyond my skill, but maybe it is not beyond yours. You are Flemming's intimate friend, his *fidus Achates*. Write to him, write to him frequently, distract his mind, cheer him up, and prevent him from becoming a confirmed case of melancholia. Perhaps he has some important plans disarranged by his present confinement. If he has you will know, and will know how to advise him judiciously. I trust your father finds the change beneficial? I am, my dear sir, with great respect, &c.

II.

Edward Delaney to John Flemming, West 38th Street, New York.

August 9,—.

My dear Jack—I had a line from Dillon this morning, and was rejoiced to learn that your hurt is not so bad as reported. Like a certain personage you are not so black and blue as you are painted. Dillon will put you on your pins again in two or three weeks, if you will only have patience and follow his counsels. Did you get my note of last Wednesday? I was greatly troubled when I heard of the accident.

I can imagine how tranquil and saintly you are with your leg in a trough! It's deuced awkward, to be sure, just as we had promised ourselves a glorious month together at the seaside; but we must make the best of it. It is unfortunate, too, that my father's health renders it impossible for me to leave him. I think he has much improved; the sea air is his native element; but he still needs my arm to lean upon in his walks, and requires some one more careful than a servant to look after him. I cannot come to you, dear Jack, but I have hours of unemployed time on hand, and I will write you a whole post-office full of letters if that will divert you. Heaven knows, I haven't anything to write about. It isn't as if we were living at one of the beach houses; then I could do you some character studies, and fill your imagination with hosts of sea-goddesses, with their (or somebody else's) raven and blond manes hanging down their shoulders. You should have Aphrodite in morning wrapper, in evening costume, and in her prettiest bathing suit. But we are far from all that here. We have rooms in a farm-house, on a cross-road, two miles from the hotels, and lead the quietest of lives.

I wish I were a novelist. This old house, with its sanded floors

and high wainscots, and its narrow windows looking out upon a cluster of pines that turn themselves into æolian-harps every time the wind blows, would be the place in which to write a summer romance. It should be a story with the odours of the forest and the breath of the sea in it. It should be a novel like one of that Russian fellow's—what's his name?—Tourguénieff, Tourguenef, Toorguniff, Turgénjew; nobody knows how to spell him. (I think his own mother must be in some doubt about him.) Yet I wonder if even a Liza or an Alexandra Paulovna could stir the heart of a man who has constant twinges in his leg. I wonder if one of our own Yankee girls of the best type, haughty and *spirituelle*, would be of any comfort to you in your present deplorable condition. If I thought so, I would rush down to the Surf House and catch one for you; or, better still, I would find you one over the way.

Picture to yourself a large white house just across the road, nearly opposite our cottage. It is not a house, but a mansion, built perhaps in the colonial period, with rambling extensions, and gambrel roof, and a wide piazza on three sides—a self-possessed, high-bred piece of architecture, with its nose in the air. It stands back from the road, and has an obsequious retinue of fringed elms and oaks and weeping willows. Sometimes in the morning, and oftener in the afternoon, when the sun has withdrawn from that part of the mansion, a young woman appears on the piazza, with some mysterious Penelope web of embroidery in her hand, or a book. There is a hammock over there—of pine-apple fibre, it looks from here. A hammock is very becoming when one is eighteen, and has gold hair, and dark eyes, and a blue illusion dress looped up after the fashion of a Dresden china shepherdess, and is *chaussée* like a belle of the time of Louis Quatorze. All this splendour goes into that hammock, and sways there like a pond-lily in the golden afternoon. The window of my bedroom looks down on that piazza, and so do I.

But enough of this nonsense, which ill becomes a sedate young attorney taking his vacation with an invalid father. Drop me a line, dear Jack, and tell me how you really are. State your case. Write me a long quiet letter. If you are violent or abusive I'll take the law to you.

III

John Flemming to Edward Delaney

August 11—.

Your letter, dear Ned, was a god-send. Fancy what a fix I am in; I, who never had a day's sickness since I was born. My left leg weighs three tons. It is embalmed in spices, and smothered in layers of fine linen like a mummy. I can't move. I haven't moved for five thousand years. I'm of the time of Pharaoh.

I lie from morning till night on a lounge staring into the hot street. Everybody is out of town enjoying himself. The brown stone-front

houses across the street resemble a row of particularly ugly coffins set up on end. A green mould is settling on the names of the deceased, carved on the silver door-plates. Sardonic spiders have sewed up the key-holes. All is silence and dust and desolation.—I interrupt this a moment to take a shy at Watkins with the second volume of *César Birotteau*. Missed him! I think I could bring him down with a copy of *Sainte-Beuve*, or the *Dictionnaire Universel*, if I had it. These small Balzac books somehow don't quite fit my hand. But I shall fetch him yet. I've an idea Watkins is tapping the old gentleman's Château Yquem. Duplicate key of the wine-cellar. Hibernian swarries in the front basement. Young Cheops upstairs, snug in his cerements. Watkins glides into my chamber with that colourless, hypocritical face of his drawn out long like an accordion; but I know he grins all the way downstairs, and is glad I have broken my leg. Was not my evil star in the very zenith when I ran up to town to attend that dinner at Delmonico's? I didn't come up altogether for that. It was partly to buy Frank Livingstone's roan mare Margot. And now I shall not be able to sit in the saddle these two months. I'll send the mare down to you at The Pines; is that the name of the place?

Old Dillon fancies that I have something on my mind. He drives me wild with lemons. Lemons for a mind diseased. Nonsense. I am only as restless as the devil under this confinement—a thing I'm not used to. Take a man who has never had so much as a headache or a toothache in his life, strap one of his legs in a section of water-spout, keep him in a room in the city for weeks, with the hot weather turned on, and then expect him to smile, and purr, and be happy! It is preposterous. I can't be cheerful or calm.

Your letter is the first consoling thing I have had since my disaster, a week ago. It really cheered me up for half an hour. Send me a screed, Ned, as often as you can, if you love me. Anything will do. Write me more about that little girl in the hammock. That was very pretty all that about the Dresden china shepherdess and the pond-lily; the imagery a little mixed perhaps, but very pretty. I didn't suppose you had so much sentimental furniture in your upper storey. It shows how one may be familiar for years with the reception-room of his neighbour, and never suspect what is directly under his mansard. I supposed your loft stuffed with dry legal parchments, mortgages, and affidavits; you take down a package of manuscript, and lo! there are lyrics, and sonnets, and canzonettas. You really have a graphic descriptive touch, Edward Delaney, and I suspect you of short love-tales in the magazines.

I shall be a bear until I hear from you again. Tell me all about your pretty *inconnue* across the road. What is her name? Who is she? Who's her father? Where's her mother? Who's her lover? You cannot imagine how this will occupy me. The more trifling the better. My imprisonment has weakened me intellec-

tually to such a degree that I find your epistolary gifts quite considerable. I am passing into my second childhood. In a week or two I shall take to india-rubber rings and prongs of coral. A silver cup with an appropriate inscription would be a delicate attention on your part. In the meantime write!

IV

Edward Delaney to John Flemming

August 12, —.

The sick pasha shall be amused. *Bismillah!* he wills it so! If the story-teller becomes prolix and tedious—the bow-string and the sack, and two Nubians to drop him into the Piscataqua! But truly, Jack, I have a hard task. There is literally nothing here except the little girl over the way. She is swinging in the hammock at this moment. It is to me compensation for many of the ills of life to see her now and then put out a small kid boot, which fits like a glove, and set herself going. Who is she and what is her name? Her name is Daw. Only daughter of Mr. Richard W. Daw, ex-colonel and banker. Mother dead. One brother at Harvard; elder brother killed at the battle of Fair Oaks nine years ago. Old, rich family the Daws. This is the homestead where father and daughter pass eight months of the twelve; the rest of the year in Baltimore and Washington. The New England winter too many for the old gentleman. The daughter is called Marjorie—Marjorie Daw. Sounds odd at first, doesn't it? But after you say it over to yourself half a dozen times you like it. There's a pleasing quaintness to it, something prim and violet-like. Must be a nice sort of girl to be called Marjorie Daw.

I had mine host of The Pines in the witness-box last night, and drew the foregoing testimony from him. He has charge of Mr. Daw's vegetable-garden, and has known the family these thirty years. Of course I shall make the acquaintance of my neighbours before many days. It will be next to impossible for me not to meet Mr. Daw or Miss Daw in some of my walks. The young lady has a favourite path to the sea-beach. I shall intercept her some morning, and touch my hat to her. Then the princess will bend her fair head to me with courteous surprise, not unmixed with haughtiness. Will snub me, in fact. All this for thy sake, O Pasha of the Snapt Axle-tree! . . . How oddly things fall out! Ten minutes ago I was called down to the parlour—you know the kind of parlours in farm-houses on the coast; a sort of amphibious parlour, with sea-shells on the mantelpiece and spruce branches in the chimney-place —where I found my father and Mr. Daw doing the antique polite to each other. He had come to pay his respects to his new neighbours. Mr. Daw is a tall, slim gentleman of about fifty-five, with a florid face and snow-white moustache and side-whiskers. Looks

like Mr. Dombey, or as Mr. Dombey would have looked if he had served a few years in the British army. Mr. Daw was a colonel in the late war, commanding the regiment in which his son was a lieutenant. Plucky old boy, backbone of New Hampshire granite. Before taking his leave the colonel delivered himself of an invitation, as if he were issuing a general order. Miss Daw has a few friends coming at 4 P.M., to play croquet on the lawn (parade-ground), and have tea (cold rations) on the piazza. Will we honour them with our company (or be sent to the guard-house)? My father declines on the plea of ill-health. My father's son bows with as much suavity as he knows, and accepts.

In my next I shall have something to tell you. I shall have seen the little beauty face to face. I have a presentiment, Jack, that this Daw is a *rara avis!* Keep up your spirits, my boy, until I write you another letter; and send me along word how's your leg.

V

Edward Delaney to John Flemming

August 13, —.

The party, my dear Jack, was as dreary as possible. A lieutenant of the navy, the rector of the Episcopal church at Stillwater, and a society swell from Nahant. The lieutenant looked as if he had swallowed a couple of his buttons and found the bullion rather indigestible; the rector was a pensive youth of the daffydowndilly sort; and the swell from Nahant was a very weak tidal wave indeed. The women were much better, as they always are; the two Miss Kingsburys of Philadelphia, staying at the Sea-shell House, two bright and engaging girls. But Majorie Daw!

The company broke up soon after tea, and I remained to smoke a cigar with the colonel on the piazza. It was like seeing a picture to see Miss Marjorie hovering around the old soldier and doing a hundred gracious little things for him. She brought the cigars and lighted the tapers with her own delicate fingers in the most enchanting fashion. As we sat there she came and went in the summer twilight, and seemed, with her white dress and pale gold hair, like some lovely phantom that had sprung into existence out of the smoke-wreaths. If she had melted into air, like the statue of the lady in the play, I should have been more sorry than surprised.

It was easy to perceive that the old colonel worshipped her, and she him. I think the relation between an elderly father and a daughter just blooming into womanhood the most beautiful possible. There is in it a subtle sentiment that cannot exist in the case of mother and daughter, or that of son and mother. But this is getting into deep water.

I sat with the Daws until half-past ten and saw the moon rise on the sea. The ocean, that had stretched motionless and black

against the horizon, was changed by magic into a broken field of glittering ice. In the far distance the Isles of Shoals loomed up like a group of huge bergs drifting down on us. The polar regions in a June thaw! It was exceedingly fine. What did we talk about? We talked about the weather—and *you!* The weather has been disagreeable for several days past—and so have you. I glided from one topic to the other very naturally. I told my friends of your accident; how it had frustrated all our summer plans, and what our plans were. Then I described you; or, rather, I didn't. I spoke of your amiability; of your patience under this severe affliction; of your touching gratitude when Dillon brings you little presents of fruit; of your tenderness to your sister Fanny, whom you would not allow to stay in town to nurse you, and how you heroically sent her back to Newport, preferring to remain alone with Mary the cook and your man Watkins, to whom, by the way, you were devotedly attached. If you had been there, Jack, you wouldn't have known yourself. I should have excelled as a criminal lawyer if I had not turned my attention to a different branch of jurisprudence.

Miss Majorie asked all manner of leading questions concerning you. It did not occur to me then, but it struck me forcibly afterwards that she evinced a singular interest in the conversation. When I got back to my room I recalled how eagerly she leaned forward, with her full, snowy throat in strong moonlight, listening to what I said. Positively, I think I made her like you!

Miss Daw is a girl whom you would like immensely, I can tell you that. A beauty without affectation; a high and tender nature, if one can read the soul in the face. And the old colonel is a noble character too.

I am glad the Daws are such pleasant people. The Pines is an isolated place and my resources are few. I fear I should have found life here rather monotonous before long with no other society than that of my excellent sire. It is true I might have made a target of the defenceless invalid; but I haven't a taste for artillery, *moi*.

VI

John Flemming to Edward Delaney

August 17, —.

For a man who hasn't a taste for artillery it occurs to me, my friend, you are keeping up a pretty lively fire on my inner works. But go on. Cynicism is a small brass field-piece that eventually bursts and kills the artillery man.

You may abuse me as much as you like, and I'll not complain; for I don't know what I should do without your letters. They are curing me. I haven't hurled anything at Watkins since last Sunday, partly because I have grown more amiable under your teaching, and partly because Watkins captured my ammunition one night and

carried it off to the library. He is rapidly losing the habit he had acquired of dodging whenever I rub my ear, or make any slight motion with my right arm. He is still suggestive of the wine cellar, however. You may break, you may shatter Watkins if you will, but the scent of the Roederer will hang round him still.

Ned, that Miss Daw must be a charming person. I should certainly like her. I like her already. When you spoke in your first letter of seeing a young girl swinging in a hammock under your chamber window I was somehow strangely drawn to her. I cannot account for it in the least. What you have subsequently written of Miss Daw has strengthened the impression. You seem to be describing a woman I have known in some previous state of existence, or dreamed of in this. Upon my word, if you were to send me her photograph I believe I should recognise her at a glance. Her manner, that listening attitude, her traits of character, as you indicate them, the light hair and the dark eyes, they are all familiar things to me. Asked a lot of questions, did she? Curious about me? That is strange.

You would laugh in your sleeve, you wretched old cynic, if you knew how I lie awake nights, with my gas turned down to a star, thinking of The Pines and the house across the road. How cool it must be down there! I long for the salt smell in the air. I picture the colonel smoking his cheroot on the piazza. I send you and Miss Daw off on afternoon rambles along the beach. Sometimes I let you stroll with her under the elms in the moonlight, for you are great friends by this time, I take it, and see each other every day. I know your ways and your manners! Then I fall into a truculent mood and would like to destroy somebody. Have you noticed anything in the shape of a lover hanging around the colonial Lares and Penates? Does that lieutenant of the horse-marines or that young Stillwater parson visit the house much? Not that I am pining for news of them, but any gossip of the kind would be in order. I wonder, Ned, you don't fall in love with Miss Daw. I am ripe to do it myself. Speaking of photographs, couldn't you manage to slip one of her *cartes-de-visite* from her album—she must have an album, you know—and send it to me? I will return it before it could be missed. That's a good fellow! Did the mare arrive safe and sound? It will be a capital animal this autumn for Central Park.

Oh—my leg? I forgot about my leg. It's better.

VII

Edward Delaney to John Flemming

August 20, —.

You are correct in your surmises. I am on the most friendly terms with our neighbours. The colonel and my father smoke their

afternoon cigar together in our sitting-room, or on the piazza opposite, and I pass an hour or two of the day or the evening with the daughter. I am more and more struck by the beauty, modesty, and intelligence of Miss Daw.

You ask me why I do not fall in love with her. I will be frank, Jack; I have thought of that. She is young, rich, accomplished, uniting in herself more attractions, mental and personal, than I can recall in any girl of my acquaintance; but she lacks the something that would be necessary to inspire in me that kind of interest. Possessing this unknown quantity, a woman neither beautiful, nor wealthy, nor very young could bring me to her feet. But not Miss Daw. If we were shipwrecked together on an uninhabited island—let me suggest a tropical island, for it costs no more to be picturesque—I would build her a bamboo hut, I would fetch her bread-fruit and cocoa-nuts, I would fry yams for her, I would lure the ingenuous turtle and make her nourishing soups; but I wouldn't make love to her—not under eighteen months. I would like to have her for a sister, that I might shield her and counsel her, and spend half my income on thread-laces and camel's-hair shawls. (We are off the island now.) If such were not my feeling there would still be an obstacle to my loving Miss Daw. A greater misfortune could scarcely befall me than to love her. Flemming, I am about to make a revelation that will astonish you. I may be all wrong in my premises, and consequently in my conclusions; but you shall judge.

That night when I returned to my room after the croquet party at the Daws', and was thinking over the trivial events of the evening, I was suddenly impressed by the air of eager attention with which Miss Daw had followed my account of your accident. I think I mentioned this to you. Well, the next morning as I went to mail my letter, I overtook Miss Daw on the road to Rye, where the post-office is, and accompanied her thither and back—an hour's walk. The conversation again turned on you, and again I remarked that inexplicable look of interest which had lighted up her face the previous evening. Since then I have seen Miss Daw perhaps ten times, perhaps oftener, and on each occasion I found that when I was not speaking of you, or your sister, or some person or place associated with you, I was not holding her attention. She would be absent-minded; her eyes would wander away from me to the sea, or to some distant object in the landscape; her fingers would play with the leaves of a book in a way that convinced me she was not listening. At these moments if I abruptly changed the theme—I did it several times as an experiment—and dropped some remark about my friend Flemming, then the sombre blue eyes would come back to me instantly.

Now, is not this the oddest thing in the world? No, not the oddest. The effect which, you tell me, was produced on you by my

casual mention of an unknown girl swinging in a hammock, is certainly as strange. You can conjecture how that passage in your letter of Friday startled me. Is it possible then, that two people who have never met, and who are hundreds of miles apart, can exert a magnetic influence on each other? I have read of such psychological phenomena, but never credited them. I leave the solution of the problem to you. As for myself, all other things being favourable, it would be impossible for me to fall in love with a woman who listens to me only when I am talking of my friend!

I am not aware that any one is paying marked attention to my fair neighbour. The lieutenant of the navy—he is stationed at Rivermouth—sometimes drops in of an evening, and sometimes the rector from Stillwater; the lieutenant the oftener. He was there last night. I should not be surprised if he had an eye to the heiress; but he is not formidable. Mistress Daw carries a neat little spear of irony, and the honest lieutenant seems to have a particular facility for impaling himself on the point of it. He is not dangerous, I should say; though I have known a woman to satirise a man for years and marry him after all. Decidedly the lowly rector is not dangerous; yet, again, who has not seen cloth of frieze victorious in the lists where cloth of gold went down?

As to the photograph. There is an exquisite ivorytype of Marjorie in *passe-partout*, on the drawing-room mantelpiece. It would be missed at once if taken. I would do anything reasonable for you, Jack; but I've no burning desire to be hauled up before the local justice of the peace on a charge of petty larceny.

P.S.—Enclosed is a spray of mignonette, which I advise you to treat tenderly. Yes, we talked of you again last night as usual. It is becoming a little dreary for me.

VIII

Edward Delaney to John Flemming

August 22, —.

Your letter in reply to my last has occupied my thoughts all the morning. I do not know what to think. Do you mean to say that you are seriously half in love with a woman whom you have never seen—with a shadow, a chimera? for what else can Miss Daw be to you? I do not understand it at all. I understand neither you nor her. You are a couple of ethereal beings moving in finer air than I can breathe with my commonplace lungs. Such delicacy of sentiment is something I admire without comprehending. I am bewildered. I am of the earth earthy; and I find myself in the incongruous position of having to do with mere souls, with natures so finely tempered that I run some risk of shattering them in my awkwardness. I am as Caliban among the spirits!

Reflecting on your letter I am not sure it is wise in me to continue this correspondence. But no, Jack ; I do wrong to doubt the good sense that forms the basis of your character. You are deeply interested in Miss Daw ; you feel that she is a person whom you may perhaps greatly admire when you know her : at the same time you bear in mind that the chances are ten to five, that, when you do come to know her, she will fall far short of your ideal, and you will not care for her in the least. Look at it in this sensible light, and I will hold back nothing from you.

Yesterday afternoon my father and myself rode over to Rivermouth with the Daws. A heavy rain in the morning had cooled the atmosphere and laid the dust. To Rivermouth is a drive of eight miles, along a winding road lined all the way with wild barberry bushes. I never saw anything more brilliant than these bushes, the green of the foliage and the red of the coral berries intensified by the rain. The colonel drove, with my father in front, Miss Daw and I on the back seat. I resolved that for the first five miles your name should not pass my lips. I was amused by the artful attempts she made, at the start, to break through my reticence. Then a silence fell upon her ; and then she became suddenly gay. That keenness which I enjoyed so much when it was exercised on the lieutenant was not so satisfactory directed against myself. Miss Daw has great sweetness of disposition, but she can be disagreeable. She is like the young lady in the rhyme, with the curl on her forehead,

> When she is good,
> She is very, very good,
> And when she is bad, she is horrid !

I kept to my resolution, however ; but on the return home I relented, and talked of your mare ! Miss Daw is going to try a side-saddle on Margot some morning. The animal is a trifle too light for my weight. By the by, I nearly forgot to say Miss Daw sat for a picture yesterday to a Rivermouth artist. If the negative turns out well I am to have a copy. So our ends will be accomplished without crime. I wish, though, I could send you the ivorytype in the drawing-room ; it is cleverly coloured, and would give you an idea of her hair and eyes, which, of course, the other will not.

No, Jack, the spray of mignonette did not come from me. A man of twenty-eight doesn't enclose flowers in his letters—to another man. But don't attach too much significance to the circumstance. She gives sprays of mignonette to the rector, sprays to the lieutenant. She has even given a rose from her bosom to your slave. It is her jocund nature to scatter flowers, like spring.

If my letters sometimes read disjointedly you must understand that I never finish one at a sitting, but write at intervals, when the mood is on me.

The mood is not on me now,

IX

Edward Delaney to John Flemming

August 23, —.

I have just returned from the strangest interview with Marjorie. She has all but confessed to me her interest in you. But with what modesty and dignity! Her words elude my pen as I attempt to put them on paper; and, indeed, it was not so much what she said as her manner; and that I cannot reproduce. Perhaps it was of a piece with the strangeness of this whole business that she should tacitly acknowledge to a third party the love she feels for a man she has never beheld! But I have lost, through your aid, the faculty of being surprised. I accept things as people do in dreams. Now that I am again in my room it all appears like an illusion—the black masses of shadow under the trees, the fire-flies whirling in Pyrrhic dances among the shrubbery, the sea over there, Marjorie sitting on the hammock!

It is past midnight, and I am too sleepy to write more.

Tuesday Morning—My father has suddenly taken it into his head to spend a few days at the Shoals. In the meanwhile you will not hear from me. I see Marjorie walking in the garden with the colonel. I wish I could speak to her alone, but shall probably not have an opportunity before we leave.

X

Edward Delaney to John Flemming

August 28, —.

You were pssing into your second childhood, were you? Your intellect was so reduced that my epistolary gifts seemed quite considerable to you, did they? I rise superior to the sarcasm in your favour of the 11th instant, when I notice that five days' silence on my part is sufficient to throw you into the depths of despondency.

We returned only this morning from Appledore, that enchanted island—at four dollars per day. I find on my desk three letters from you! Evidently there is no lingering doubt in *your* mind as to the pleasure I derive from your correspondence. These letters are undated, but in what I take to be the latest are two passages that require my consideration. You will pardon my candour, dear Flemming, but the conviction forces itself upon me that as your leg grows stronger your head becomes weaker. You ask my advice on a certain point. I will give it. In my opinion you could do nothing more unwise than to address a note to Miss Daw, thanking her for the flower. It would, I am sure, offend her delicacy beyond pardon. She knows you only through me; you are to her an abstraction, a figure in a dream—a dream from which the slightest shock would awaken her. Of course, if you enclose a note to me and insist on

its delivery, I shall deliver it ; but I advise you not to do so.

You say you are able, with the aid of a cane, to walk about your chamber, and that you purpose to come to The Pines the instant Dillon thinks you strong enough to stand the journey. Again I advise you not to. Do you not see that, every hour you remain away, Marjorie's glamour deepens and your influence over her increases ? You will ruin everything by precipitancy. Wait until you are entirely recovered ; in any case do not come without giving we warning. I fear the effect of your abrupt advent here—in the circumstances.

Miss Daw was evidently glad to see us back again, and gave me both hands in the frankest way. She stopped at the door for a moment this afternoon in the carriage ; she had been over to Rivermouth for her pictures. Unluckily the photographer had spilt some acid on the plate and she was obliged to give him another sitting. I have an impression that something is troubling Marjorie. She had an abstracted air not usual with her. However, it may be only my fancy. . . . I end this, leaving several things unsaid, to accompany my father on one of those long walks which are now his chief medicine—and mine !

XI

Edward Delaney to John Flemming

August 29, —.

I write in great haste to tell you what has taken place here since my letter of last night. I am in the utmost perplexity. Only one thing is plain—*you* must not dream of coming to The Pines. Marjorie has told her father everything ! I saw her for a few minutes, an hour ago, in the garden ; and, as near as I could gather from her confused statement, the facts are these : Lieutenant Bradly—that's the naval officer stationed at Rivermouth—has been paying court to Miss Daw for some time past, but not so much to her liking as to that of the colonel, who it seems is an old friend of the young gentleman's father. Yesterday (I knew she was in some trouble when she drove up to our gate) the colonel spoke to Marjorie of Bradly—urged his suit, I infer. Marjorie expressed her dislike for the lieutenant with characteristic frankness, and finally confessed to her father—well, I really do not know what she confessed. It must have been the vaguest of confessions, and must have sufficiently puzzled the colonel. At any rate, it exasperated him. I suppose I am implicated in the matter, and that the colonel feels bitterly towards me. I do not see why : I have carried no messages between you and Miss Daw ; I have behaved with the greatest discretion. I can find no flaw anywhere in my proceeding. I do not see that anybody has done anything—except the colonel himself.

It is probable, nevertheless, that the friendly relations between

the two houses will be broken off. "A plague o' both your houses," say you. I will keep you informed, as well as I can, of what occurs over the way. We shall remain here until the second week in September. Stay where you are, or at all events, do not dream of joining me. . . . Colonel Daw is sitting on the piazza looking rather ferocious. I have not seen Marjorie since I parted with her in the garden.

XII

Edward Delaney to Thomas Dillon, M.D., Madison Square, New York.

August 30, —.

My Dear Doctor—If you have any influence over Flemming, I beg of you to exert it to prevent his coming to this place at present. There are circumstances, which I will explain to you before long, that make it of the first importance that he should not come into this neighbourhood. His appearance here, I speak advisedly, would be disastrous to him. In urging him to remain in New York, or to go to some inland resort, you will be doing him and me a real service. Of course you will not mention my name in this connection. You know me well enough, my dear doctor, to be assured that, in begging your secret co-operation, I have reasons that will meet your entire approval when they are made plain to you. My father, I am glad to state, has so greatly improved that he can no longer be regarded as an invalid. With great esteem, I am, &c. &c.

XIII

Edward Delaney to John Flemming

August 30, —.

Your letter announcing your mad determination to come here has just reached me. I beg of you to reflect a moment. The step would be fatal to your interests and hers. You would furnish just cause for irritation to R. W. D.; and, though he loves Marjorie tenderly, he is capable of going to any lengths if opposed. You would not like, I am convinced, to be the means of causing him to treat *her* with severity. That would be the result of your presence at the Pines at this juncture. Wait and see what happens. Moreover, I understand from Dillon that you are in no condition to take so long a journey. He thinks the air of the coast would be the worst thing possible for you; that you ought to go inland, if anywhere. Be advised by me. Be advised by Dillon.

XIV

Telegrams.

September 1, —.

1. *To Edward Delaney*

Letter received. Dillon be hanged. I think I ought to be on the ground.

J. F.

2. *To John Flemming*

Stay where you are. You would only complicate matters. Do not move until you hear from me. *E. D.*

3. *To Edward Delaney*

My being at The Pines could be kept secret. I must see her. *J. F.*

4. *To John Flemming*

Do not think of it. It would be useless. R. W. D. has locked M. in her room. You would not be able to effect an interview. *E. D.*

5. *To Edward Delaney*

Locked her in her room! That settles the question. I shall leave by the 12.15 express. *J. F.*

On the 2nd of September 187–, as the down express due at 3.40 left the station at Hampton, a young man, leaning on the shoulder of a servant whom he addressed as Watkins, stepped from the platform into a hack, and requested to be driven to The Pines. On arriving at the gate of a modest farmhouse, a few miles from the station, the young man descended with difficulty from the carriage, and, casting a hasty glance across the road, seemed much impressed by some peculiarity in the landscape. Again leaning on the shoulder of the person Watkins, he walked to the door of the farmhouse and inquired for Mr. Edward Delaney. He was informed by the aged man who answered his knock that Mr. Edward Delaney had gone to Boston the day before, but that Mr. Jonas Delaney was within. This information did not appear satisfactory to the stranger, who inquired if Mr. Edward Delaney had left any message for Mr. John Flemming. There *was* a letter for Mr. Flemming, if he were that person. After a brief absence the aged man reappeared with a letter.

XV

Edward Delaney to John Flemming

September 1, —.

I am horror-stricken at what I have done! When I began this correspondence I had no other purpose than to relieve the tedium of your sick-chamber. Dillon told me to cheer you up. I tried to. I thought you entered into the spirit of the thing. I had no idea, until within a few days, that you were taking matters *au sérieux*.

What can I say? I am in sackcloth and ashes. I am a Pariah, a dog of an outcast. I tried to make a little romance to interest you, something soothing and idyllic, and, by Jove! I have done it only too well! My father doesn't know a word of this, so don't

jar the old gentleman any more than you can help. I fly from the wrath to come—when you arrive! For O, dear Jack, there isn't any colonial mansion on the other side of the road, there isn't any piazza, there isn't any hammock—there isn't any Marjorie Daw!!

MADEMOISELLE OLYMPE ZABRISKI

THOMAS BAILEY ALDRICH

I

WE are accustomed to speak with a certain light irony of the tendency which women have to gossip, as if the sin itself, if it is a sin, were of the gentler sex, and could by no chance be a masculine peccadillo. So far as my observation goes, men are as much given to small talk as women, and it is undeniable that we have produced the highest type of gossiper extant. Where will you find, in or out of literature, such another droll, delightful, chatty busybody as Samuel Pepys, Esq., Secretary to the Admiralty in the reigns of those fortunate gentlemen Charles II. and James II. of England? He is the king of tattlers, as Shakespeare is the king of poets.

If it came to a matter of pure gossip, I would back Our Club against the Sorosis or any women's club in existence. Whenever you see in your drawing-room four or five young fellows lounging in easy-chairs, cigar in hand, and now and then bringing their heads together over the small round Japanese table which is always the pivot of these social circles, you may be sure that they are discussing Tom's engagement, or Dick's extravagance, or Harry's hopeless passion for the younger Miss Fleurdelys. It is here old Tippleton gets execrated for that everlasting *bon mot* of his which was quite a success at dinner-parties forty years ago; it is here the belle of the season passes under the scalpels of merciless young surgeons; it is here B's financial condition is handled in a way that would make B's hair stand on end; it is here, in short, that everything is canvassed—everything that happens in our set, I mean—much that never happens, and a great deal that could not possibly happen. It was at Our Club that I learned the particulars of the Van Twiller affair.

It was great entertainment to Our Club, the Van Twiller affair, though it was rather a joyless thing, I fancy, for Van Twiller. To

understand the case fully, it should be understood that Ralph Van Twiller is one of the proudest and most sensitive men living. He is a lineal descendant of Wouter Van Twiller, the famous old Dutch governor of New York—Nieuw Amsterdam, as it was then; his ancestors have always been burgomasters or admirals or generals, and his mother is the Mrs. Vanrensselaer Vanzandt Van Twiller whose magnificent place will be pointed out to you on the right bank of the Hudson as you pass up the historic river toward Idlewild. Ralph is about twenty-five years old. Birth made him a gentleman, and the rise of real estate—some of it in the family since the old governor's time—made him a millionaire. It was a kindly fairy that stepped in and made him a good fellow also. Fortune, I take it, was in her most jocund mood when she heaped her gifts in this fashion on Van Twiller, who was, and will be again, when this cloud blows over, the flower of Our Club.

About a year ago there came a whisper—if the word "whisper" is not too harsh a term to apply to what seemed a mere breath floating gently through the atmosphere of the billiard-room—imparting the intelligence that Van Twiller was in some kind of trouble. Just as everybody suddenly takes to wearing square-toed boots, or to drawing his neck-scarf through a ring, so it became all at once the fashion, without any preconcerted agreement, for everybody to speak of Van Twiller as a man in some way under a cloud. But what the cloud was, and how he got under it, and why he did not get away from it, were points that lifted themselves into the realm of pure conjecture. There was no man in the club with strong enough wing to his imagination to soar to the supposition that Van Twiller was embarrassed in money matters. Was he in love? That appeared nearly as improbable; for if he had been in love all the world—that is, perhaps a hundred first families—would have known all about it instantly.

"He has the symptoms," said Delaney, laughing. "I remember once when Jack Flemming——"

"Ned!" cried Flemming, "I protest against any allusion to that business."

This was one night when Van Twiller had wandered into the club, turned over the magazines absently in the reading-room, and wandered out again without speaking ten words. The most careless eye would have remarked the great change that had come over Van Twiller. Now and then he would play a game of billiards with De Peyster or Haseltine, or stop to chat a moment in the vestibule with old Duane; but he was an altered man. When at the club, he was usually to be found in the small smoking-room upstairs, seated on a fauteuil fast asleep, with the last number of *The Nation* in his hand. Once, if you went to two or three places of an evening, you were certain to meet Van Twiller at them all. You seldom met him in society now.

By and by came whisper number two—a whisper more emphatic than number one, but still untraceable to any tangible mouthpiece. This time the whisper said that Van Twiller *was* in love. But with whom? The list of possible Mrs. Van Twillers was carefully examined by experienced hands, and a check placed against a fine old Knickerbocker name here and there, but nothing satisfactory arrived at. Then that same still small voice of rumour, but now with an easily detected staccato sharpness to it, said that Van Twiller was in love—with an actress! Van Twiller, whom it had taken all these years and all this waste of raw material in the way of ancestors to bring to perfection—Ralph Van Twiller, the net result and flower of his race, the descendant of Wouter, the son of Mrs. Vanrensselaer Vanzandt Van Twiller—in love with an actress! That was too ridiculous to be believed—and so everybody believed it.

Six or seven members of the club abruptly discovered in themselves an unsuspected latent passion for the histrionic art. In squads of two or three they stormed successively all the theatres in town—Booth's, Wallack's, Daly's Fifth Avenue (not burned down then), and the Grand Opera House. Even the shabby homes of the drama over in the Bowery, where the Germanic Thespis has not taken out his naturalisation papers, underwent rigid exploration. But no clue was found to Van Twiller's mysterious attachment. The *opéra bouffe*, which promised the widest field for investigation, produced absolutely nothing, not even a crop of suspicions. One night, after several weeks of this, Delaney and I fancied that we caught sight of Van Twiller in the private box of an uptown theatre, where some thrilling trapeze performance was going on, which we did not care to sit through; but we concluded afterward that it was only somebody who looked like him. Delaney, by the way, was unusually active in this search. I daresay he never quite forgave Van Twiller for calling him Muslin Delaney. Ned is fond of ladies' society, and that's a fact.

The Cimmerian darkness which surrounded Van Twiller's inamorata left us free to indulge in the wildest conjectures. Whether she was black-tressed Melpomene, with bowl and dagger, or Thalia, with the fair hair and the laughing face, was only to be guessed at. It was popularly conceded, however, that Van Twiller was on the point of forming a dreadful *mésalliance*.

Up to this period he had visited the club regularly. Suddenly he ceased to appear. He was not to be seen on Fifth Avenue, or in the Central Park, or at the houses he generally frequented. His chambers—and mighty comfortable chambers they were—on Thirty-fourth Street were deserted. He had dropped out of the world, shot like a bright particular star from his orbit in the heaven of the best society.

The following conversation took place one night in the smoking-room:

"Where's Van Twiller?"

"Who's seen Van Twiller?"

"What has become of Van Twiller?"

Delaney picked up the *Evening Post*, and read—with a solemnity that betrayed young Firkins into exclaiming, "By Jove, now!——"

"Married, on the 10th instant, by the Rev. Friar Laurence, at the residence of the bride's uncle, Montague Capulet, Esq., Miss Adrienne Le Couvreur to Mr. Ralph Van Twiller, both of this city. No cards."

"Free List suspended," murmured De Peyster.

"It strikes me," said Frank Livingstone, who had been ruffling the leaves of a magazine at the other end of the table, "that you fellows are in a great fever about Van Twiller."

"So we are."

"Well, he has simply gone out of town."

"Where?"

"Up to the old homestead on the Hudson."

"It's an odd time of year for a fellow to go into the country."

"He has gone to visit his mother," said Livingstone.

"In February?"

"I didn't know, Delaney, that there was any statute in force prohibiting a man from visiting his mother in February if he wants to."

Delaney made some light remark about the pleasure of communing with Nature with a cold in her head, and the topic was dropped.

Livingstone was hand in glove with Van Twiller, and if any man shared his confidence it was Livingstone. He was aware of the gossip and speculation that had been rife in the club, but he either was not at liberty or did not think it worth while to relieve our curiosity. In the course of a week or two it was reported that Van Twiller was going to Europe; and go he did. A dozen of us went down to the "Scythia" to see him off. It was refreshing to have something as positive as the fact that Van Twiller had sailed.

II

Shortly after Van Twiller's departure the whole thing came out. Whether Livingstone found the secret too heavy a burden, or whether it transpired through some indiscretion on the part of Mrs. Vanrensselaer Vanzandt Van Twiller, I cannot say; but one evening the entire story was in the possession of the club.

Van Twiller had actually been very deeply interested—not in an actress, for the legitimate drama was not her humble walk in life, but—in Mademoiselle Olympe Zabriski, whose really perilous feats on the trapeze had astonished New York the year before, though they had failed to attract Delaney and me the night we wandered

into the uptown theatre on the trail of Van Twiller's mystery.

That a man like Van Twiller should be fascinated even for an instant by a common circus-girl seems incredible ; but it is always the incredible thing that happens. Besides, Mademoiselle Olympe was not a common circus-girl ; she was a most daring and startling gymnast, with a beauty and a grace of movement that gave to her audacious performance almost an air of prudery. Watching her wondrous dexterity and pliant strength, both exercised without apparent effort, it seemed the most natural proceeding in the world that she should do those unpardonable things. She had a way of melting from one graceful posture into another like the dissolving figures thrown from a stereopticon. She was a lithe, radiant shape out of the Grecian mythology, now poised up there above the gas-lights, and now gleaming through the air like a slender gilt arrow.

I am describing Mademoiselle Olympe as she appeared to Van Twiller on the first occasion when he strolled into the theatre where she was performing. To me she was a girl of eighteen or twenty years of age (maybe she was much older, for pearl powder and distance keep these people perpetually young), slightly but exquisitely built, with sinews of silver wire ; rather pretty, perhaps, after a manner, but showing plainly the effects of the exhaustive draughts she was making on her physical vitality. Now, Van Twiller was an enthusiast on the subject of calisthenics. "If I had a daughter," Van Twiller used to say, "I wouldn't send her to a boarding-school, or a nunnery ; I'd send her to a gymnasium for the first five years. Our American women have no physique. They are lilies, pallid, pretty—and perishable. You marry an American woman, and what do you marry ? A headache. Look at English girls. They are at least roses, and last the season through."

Walking home from the theatre that first night, it flitted through Van Twiller's mind that if he could give this girl's set of nerves and muscles to any one of the two hundred high-bred women he knew, he would marry her on the spot and worship her for ever.

The following evening he went to see Mademoiselle Olympe again. "Olympe Zabriski," he soliloquised as he sauntered through the lobby—"what a queer name ! Olympe is French and Zabriski is Polish. It is her *nom de guerre*, of course ; her real name is probably Sarah Jones. What kind of creature can she be in private life, I wonder ? I wonder if she wears that costume all the time, and if she springs to her meals from a horizontal bar. Of course she rocks the baby to sleep on the trapeze." And Van Twiller went on making comical domestic tableaux of Mademoiselle Zabriski, like the clever, satirical dog he was, until the curtain rose.

This was on a Friday. There was a matinée the next day, and he attended that, though he had secured a seat for the usual evening entertainment. Then it became a habit of Van Twiller's to drop into the theatre for half an hour or so every night, to assist at the interlude,

in which she appeared. He cared only for her part of the programme, and timed his visits accordingly. It was a surprise to himself when he reflected, one morning, that he had not missed a single performance of Mademoiselle Olympe for nearly two weeks.

"This will never do," said Van Twiller. "Olympe"— he called her Olympe, as if she were an old acquaintance, and so she might have been considered by that time—"is a wonderful creature; but this will never do. Van, my boy, you must reform this altogether."

But half-past nine that night saw him in his accustomed orchestra chair, and so on for another week. A habit leads a man so gently in the beginning that he does not perceive he is led—with what silken threads and down what pleasant avenues it leads him! By and by the soft silk threads become iron chains, and the pleasant avenues Avernus!

Quite a new element had lately entered into Van Twiller's enjoyment of Mademoiselle Olympe's ingenious feats—a vaguely born apprehension that she might slip from that swinging bar; that one of the thin cords supporting it might snap, and let her go headlong from the dizzy height. Now and then, for a terrible instant, he would imagine her lying a glittering, palpitating heap at the footlights, with no colour in her lips! Sometimes it seemed as if the girl were tempting this kind of fate. It was a hard, bitter life, and nothing but poverty and sordid misery at home could have driven her to it. What if she should end it all some night, by just unclasping that little hand? It looked so small and white from where Van Twiller sat!

This frightful idea fascinated while it chilled him, and helped to make it nearly impossible for him to keep away from the theatre. In the beginning his attendance had not interfered with his social duties or pleasures; but now he came to find it distasteful after dinner to do anything but read or walk the streets aimlessly until it was time to go to the play. When that was over, he was in no mood to go anywhere but to his rooms. So he dropped away by insensible degrees from his habitual haunts, was missed, and began to be talked about at the club. Catching some intimation of this he ventured no more in the orchestra stalls, but shrouded himself behind the draperies of the private box in which Delaney and I thought we saw him on one occasion.

Now, I find it very perplexing to explain what Van Twiller was wholly unable to explain to himself. He was not in love with Mademoiselle Olympe. He had no wish to speak to her, or to hear her speak. Nothing could have been easier, and nothing further from his desire, than to know her personally. A Van Twiller personally acquainted with a strolling female acrobat! Good heavens! That was something possible only with the discovery of perpetual motion. Taken from her theatrical setting, from her lofty perch, so to say, on the trapeze-bar, Olympe Zabriski would have shocked every aristocratic fibre in Van Twiller's body. He was

simply fascinated by her marvellous grace and *élan*, and the magnetic recklessness of the girl. It was very young in him and very weak, and no member of the Sorosis, or all the Sorosisters together, could have been more severe on Van Twiller than he was on himself. To be weak, and to know it, is something of a punishment for a proud man. Van Twiller took his punishment, and went to the theatre regularly.

"When her engagement comes to an end," he meditated, "that will finish the business."

Mademoiselle Olympe's engagement finally did come to an end and she departed. But her engagement had been highly beneficial to the treasury-chest of the uptown theatre, and before Van Twiller could get over missing her she had returned from a short Western tour, and her immediate reappearance was underlined on the play-bills.

On a dead wall opposite the windows of Van Twiller's sleeping-room there appeared, as if by necromancy, an aggressive poster with MADEMOISELLE OLYMPE ZABRISKI on it in letters at least a foot high. This thing stared him in the face when he woke up one morning. It gave him a sensation as if she had called on him overnight and left her card.

From time to time through the day he regarded that poster with a sardonic eye. He had pitilessly resolved not to repeat the folly of the previous month. To say that this moral victory cost him nothing would be to deprive it of merit. It cost him many internal struggles. It is a fine thing to see a man seizing his temptation by the throat, and wrestling with it, and trampling it underfoot like St. Anthony. This was the spectacle Van Twiller was exhibiting to the angels.

The evening Mademoiselle Olympe was to make her reappearance, Van Twiller, having dined at the club, and feeling more like himself than he had felt for weeks, returned to his chamber, and, putting on dressing-gown and slippers, piled up the greater portion of his library about him, and fell to reading assiduously. There is nothing like a quiet evening at home with some slight intellectual occupation, after one's feathers have been stroked the wrong way.

When the lively French clock on the mantelpiece—a base of malachite surmounted by a flying bronze Mercury with its arms spread gracefully in the air, and not remotely suggestive of Mademoiselle Olympe in the act of executing her grand flight from the trapeze—when the clock, I repeat, struck nine, Van Twiller paid no attention to it. That was certainly a triumph. I am anxious to render Van Twiller all the justice I can, at this point of the narrative, inasmuch as when the half-hour sounded musically, like a crystal ball dropping into a silver bowl, he rose from the chair automatically, thrust his feet into his walking-shoes, threw his overcoat across his arm, and strode out of the room.

To be weak and to scorn your weakness, and not to be able to conquer it, is, as has been said, a hard thing; and I suspect it was

not with unalloyed satisfaction that Van Twiller found himself taking his seat in the back part of the private box night after night during the second engagement of Mademoiselle Olympe. It was so easy not to stay away!

In this second edition of Van Twiller's fatuity, his case was even worse than before. He not only thought of Olympe quite a number of time between breakfast and dinner, he not only attended the interlude regularly, but he began, in spite of himself, to occupy his leisure hours at night by dreaming of her. This was too much of a good thing, and Van Twiller regarded it so. Besides, the dream was always the same—a harrowing dream, a dream singularly adapted to shattering the nerves of a man like Van Twiller. He would imagine himself seated at the theatre (with all the members of Our Club in the parquette), watching Mademoiselle Olympe as usual, when suddenly that young lady would launch herself desperately from the trapeze, and come flying through the air like a firebrand hurled at his private box. Then the unfortunate man would wake up with cold drops standing on his forehead.

There is one redeeming feature in this infatuation of Van Twiller's which the sober moralist will love to look upon—the serene unconsciousness of the person who caused it. She went through her *rôle* with admirable aplomb, drew her salary, it may be assumed, punctually, and appears from first to have been ignorant that there was a miserable slave wearing her chains nightly in the left-hand proscenium box.

That Van Twiller, haunting the theatre with the persistency of an ex-actor, conducted himself so discreetly as not to draw the fire of Mademoiselle Olympe's blue eyes shows that Van Twiller, however deeply under a spell, was not in love. I say this, though I think if Van Twiller had not been Van Twiller, if he had been a man of no family and no position and no money, if New York had been Paris and Thirty-fourth Street a street in the Latin Quarter—but it is useless to speculate on what might have happened. What did happen is sufficient.

It happened, then, in the second week of Queen Olympe's second unconscious reign, that an appalling Whisper floated up the Hudson, effected a landing at a point between Spuyten Duyvil Creek and Cold Spring, and sought out a stately mansion of Dutch architecture standing on the bank of the river. The Whisper straightway informed the lady dwelling in this mansion that all was not well with the last of the Van Twillers; that he was gradually estranging himself from his peers, and wasting his nights in a playhouse watching a misguided young woman turning unmaidenly somersaults on a piece of wood attached to two ropes.

Mrs. Vanrensselaer Vanzandt Van Twiller came down to town by the next train to look into this little matter.

She found the flower of the family taking an early breakfast at

11 A.M., in his cosy apartments on Thirty-fourth Street. With the least possible circumlocution she confronted him with what rumour had reported of his pursuits, and was pleased, but not too much pleased, when he gave her an exact account of his relations with Mademoiselle Zabriski, neither concealing nor qualifying anything. As a confession, it was unique, and might have been a great deal less entertaining. Two or three times in the course of the narrative, the matron had some difficulty in preserving the gravity of her countenance. After meditating a few minutes, she tapped Van Twiller softly on the arm with the tip of her parasol, and invited him to return with her the next day up the Hudson and make a brief visit at the home of his ancestors. He accepted the invitation with outward alacrity and inward disgust.

When this was settled, and the worthy lady had withdrawn, Van Twiller went directly to the establishment of Messrs. Ball, Black, and Company, and selected, with unerring taste, the finest diamond bracelet procurable. For his mother? Dear me, no! She had the family jewels.

I would not like to state the enormous sum Van Twiller paid for this bracelet. It was such a clasp of diamonds as would have hastened the pulsation of a patrician wrist. It was such a bracelet as Prince Camaralzaman might have sent to the Princess Badoura, and the Princess Badoura—might have been very glad to get.

In the fragrant Levant morocco case, where these happy jewels lived, when they were at home, Van Twiller thoughtfully placed his card, on the back of which he had written a line begging Mademoiselle Olympe Zabriski to accept the accompanying trifle from one who had witnessed her graceful performances with interest and pleasure. This was not done inconsiderately. "Of course, I must enclose my card, as I would to any lady," Van Twiller had said to himself. "A Van Twiller can neither write an anonymous letter nor make an anonymous present." Blood entails its duties as well as its privileges.

The casket despatched to its destination, Van Twiller felt easier in his mind. He was under obligations to the girl for many an agreeable hour that might otherwise have passed heavily. He had paid the debt, and he had paid it *en prince*, as became a Van Twiller. He spent the rest of the day in looking at some pictures at Goupil's, and at the club, and in making a few purchases for his trip up the Hudson. A consciousness that this trip up the Hudson was a disorderly retreat came over him unpleasantly at intervals.

When he returned to his rooms late at night, he found a note lying on the writing-table. He started as his eyes caught the words "—— Theatre" stamped in carmine letters on one corner of the envelope. Van Twiller broke the seal with trembling fingers.

Now, this note some time afterward fell into the hands of Livingstone, who showed it to Stuyvesant, who showed it to Delaney,

who showed it to me, and I copied it as a literary curiosity. The note ran as follows :

MR. VAN TWILLER DEAR SIR—i am verry greatfull to you for that Bracelett. it come just in the nic of time for me. The Mademoiselle Zabriski dodg is about Plaid out. my beard is getting to much for me. i shall have to grow a mustash and take to some other line of busyness, i dont no what now, but will let you no. You wont feel bad if i sell that Bracelett. i have seen Abrahams Moss and he says he will do the square thing. Pleas accep my thanks for youre Beautifull and Unexpected present.—Youre respectfull servent,

CHARLES MONTMORENCI WALTERS.

The next day Van Twiller neither expressed nor felt any unwillingness to spend a few weeks with his mother at the old homestead.

And then he went abroad.

OUR NEW NEIGHBOURS AT PONKAPOG

THOMAS BAILEY ALDRICH

WHEN I saw the little house building, an eighth of a mile beyond my own, on the Old Bay Road, I wondered who were to be the tenants. The modest structure was set well back from the road, among the trees, as if the inmates were to care nothing whatever for a view of the stylish equipages which sweep by during the summer season. For my part, I like to see the passing, in town or country ; but each has his own unaccountable taste. The proprietor, who seemed to be also the architect of the new house, superintended the various details of the work with an assiduity that gave me a high opinion of his intelligence and executive ability, and I congratulated myself on the prospect of having some very agreeable neighbours.

It was quite early in the spring, if I remember, when they moved into the cottage—a newly married couple, evidently : the wife very young, pretty, and with the air of a lady ; the husband somewhat older, but still in the first flush of manhood. It was understood in the village that they came from Baltimore ; but no one knew them personally, and they brought no letters of introduction. (For obvious reasons I refrain from mentioning names.) It was clear

that, for the present at least, their own company was entirely sufficient for them. They made no advances toward the acquaintance of any of the families in the neighbourhood, and consequently were left to themselves. That, apparently, was what they desired, and why they came to Ponkapog. For after its black bass and wild duck and teal, solitude is the chief staple of Ponkapog. Perhaps its perfect rural loveliness should be included. Lying high up under the wing of the Blue Hills, and in the odorous breath of pines and cedars, it chances to be the most enchanting bit of unlaced dishevelled country within fifty miles of Boston, which, moreover, can be reached in half an hour's ride by railway. But the nearest railway station (Heaven be praised !) is two miles distant, and the seclusion is without a flaw. Ponkapog has one mail a day ; two mails a day would render the place uninhabitable.

The village—it looks like a compact village at a distance, but unravels and disappears the moment you drive into it—has quite a large floating population. I do not allude to the perch and pickerel in Ponkapog Pond. Along the Old Bay Road, a highway even in the colonial days, there are a number of attractive villas and cottages straggling off towards Milton, which are occupied for the summer by people from the city. These birds of passage are a distinct class from the permanent inhabitants, and the two seldom closely assimilate unless there has been some previous connection. It seemed to me that our new neighbours were to come under the head of permanent inhabitants ; they had built their own house, and had the air of intending to live in it all the year round.

" Are you not going to call on them ? " I asked my wife one morning.

" When they call on *us*," she replied lightly.

" But it is our place to call first, they being strangers."

This was said as seriously as the circumstance demanded ; but my wife turned it off with a laugh, and I said no more, always trusting to her intuitions in these matters.

She was right. She would not have been received, and a cool " Not at home " would have been a bitter social pill to us if we had gone out of our way to be courteous.

I saw a great deal of our neighbours, nevertheless. Their cottage lay between us and the post office—where *he* was never to be met with by any chance—and I caught frequent glimpses of the two working in the garden. Floriculture did not appear so much an object as exercise. Possibly it was neither ; maybe they were engaged in digging for specimens of those arrowheads and flint hatchets which are continually coming to the surface hereabouts. There is scarcely an acre in which the ploughshare has not turned up some primitive stone weapon or domestic utensil, disdainfully left to us by the red men who once held this domain—an ancient tribe called the Punkypoags, a forlorn descendant of which, one

Polly Crowd, figures in the annual Blue Book, down to the close of the Southern war, as a State pensioner. At that period she appears to have struck a trail to the Happy Hunting Grounds. I quote from the local historiographer.

Whether they were developing a kitchen-garden, or emulating Professor Schliemann at Mycenæ, the new-comers were evidently persons of refined musical taste: the lady had a contralto voice of remarkable sweetness, although of no great compass, and I used often to linger of a morning by the high gate and listen to her executing an arietta, conjecturally at some window upstairs, for the house was not visible from the turnpike. The husband, somewhere about the grounds, would occasionally respond with two or three bars. It was all quite an ideal, Arcadian business. They seemed very happy together, these two persons, who asked no odds whatever of the community in which they had settled themselves.

There was a queerness, a sort of mystery, about this couple which I admit piqued my curiosity, though as a rule I have no morbid interest in the affairs of my neighbours. They behaved like a pair of lovers who had run off and got married clandestinely. I willingly acquitted them, however, of having done anything unlawful; for, to change a word in the lines of the poet.

> It is a joy to *think* the best
> We may of human kind.

Admitting the hypothesis of elopement, there was no mystery in their neither sending nor receiving letters. But where did they get their groceries? I do not mean the money to pay for them—that is an enigma apart—but the groceries themselves. No express waggon, no butcher's cart, no vehicle of any description was ever observed to stop at their domicile. Yet they did not order family stores at the sole establishment in the village—an inexhaustible little bottle of a shop which, I advertise it gratis, can turn out anything in the way of groceries from a hand-saw to a pocket-handkerchief. I confess that I allowed this unimportant detail of their *ménage* to occupy more of my speculation than was creditable to me.

In several respects our neighbours reminded me of those inexplicable persons we sometimes come across in great cities, though seldom or never in suburban places, where the field may be supposed too restricted for their operations—persons who have no perceptible means of subsistence, and manage to live royally on nothing a year. They hold no Government bonds, they possess no real estate (our neighbours did own their house), they toil not, neither do they spin; yet they reap all the numerous soft advantages that usually result from honest toil and skilful spinning. How do they do it? But this is a digression, and I am quite of the opinion of the old lady in *David Copperfield*, who says, "Let us have no meandering."

Though my wife had declined to risk a ceremonious call on our neighbours as a family, I saw no reason why I should not speak to the husband as an individual when I happened to encounter him by the wayside. I made several approaches to do so, when it occurred to my penetration that my neighbour had the air of trying to avoid me. I resolved to put the suspicion to the test, and one forenoon, when he was sauntering along on the opposite side of the road, in the vicinity of Fisher's sawmill, I deliberately crossed over to address him. The brusque manner in which he hurried away was not to be misunderstood. Of course I was not going to force myself upon him.

It was at this time that I began to formulate uncharitable suppositions touching our neighbours, and would have been as well pleased if some of my choicest fruit-trees had not overhung their wall. I determined to keep my eyes open later in the season, when the fruit should be ripe to pluck. In some folks a sense of the delicate shades of difference between *meum* and *tuum* does not seem to be very strongly developed in the Moon of Cherries, to use the old Indian phrase.

I was sufficiently magnanimous not to impart any of these sinister impressions to the families with whom we were on visiting terms; for I despise a gossip. I would say nothing against the persons up the road until I had something definite to say. My interest in them was—well, not exactly extinguished, but burning low. I met the gentleman at intervals, and passed him without recognition; at rarer intervals I saw the lady.

After a while I not only missed my occasional glimpses of her pretty, slim figure, always draped in some soft black stuff with a bit of scarlet at the throat, but I inferred that she did not go about the house singing in her light-hearted manner as formerly. What had happened? Had the honeymoon suffered eclipse already? Was she ill? I fancied she was ill, and that I detected a certain anxiety in the husband, who spent the mornings digging solitarily in the garden, and seemed to have relinquished those long jaunts to the brow of Blue Hill, where there is a superb view of all Norfolk County combined with sundry venerable rattlesnakes with twelve rattles.

As the days went by it became certain that the lady was confined to the house, perhaps seriously ill, possibly a confirmed invalid. Whether she was attended by a physician from Canton or from Milton, I was unable to say; but neither the gig with the large white allopathic horse, nor the gig with the homœopathic sorrel mare, was ever seen hitched at the gate during the day. If a physician had charge of the case, he visited his patient only at night. All this moved my sympathy, and I reproached myself with having had hard thoughts of our neighbours. Trouble had come to them early. I would have liked to offer them such small,

friendly services as lay in my power; but the memory of the repulse I had sustained still rankled in me. So I hesitated.

One morning my two boys burst into the library with their eyes sparkling.

"You know the old elm down the road?" cried one.

"Yes."

"The elm with the hang-bird's nest?" shrieked the other.

"Yes, yes!"

"Well, we both just climbed up, and there's three young ones in it!"

Then I smiled to think that our new neighbours had got such a promising little family.

FRANCIS BRET HARTE

1839–1902

TENNESSEE'S PARTNER

I DO not think that we ever knew his real name. Our ignorance of it certainly never gave us any social inconvenience, for at Sandy Bar in 1854 most men were christened anew. Sometimes these appellatives were derived from some distinctiveness of dress, as in the case of "Dungaree Jack," or from some peculiarity of habit, as shown in "Saleratus Bill," so called from an undue proportion of that chemical in his daily bread; or from some unlucky slip, as exhibited in "The Iron Pirate," a mild, inoffensive man, who earned that baleful title by his unfortunate mispronunciation of the term "iron pyrites." Perhaps this may have been the beginning of a rude heraldry; but I am constrained to think that it was because a man's real name in that day rested solely upon his own unsupported statement.

"Call yourself Clifford, do you?" said Boston, addressing a timid new-comer with infinite scorn; "hell is full of such Cliffords!" He then introduced the unfortunate man, whose name happened to be really Clifford, as "Jay-bird Charley"—an unhallowed inspiration of the moment that clung to him ever after.

But to return to Tennessee's Partner, whom we never knew by any other than this relative title; that he had ever existed as a separate and distinct individuality we only learned later. It seems that in 1853 he left Poker Flat to go to San Francisco, ostensibly to procure a wife. He never got any farther than Stockton. At that place he was attracted by a young person who waited upon the table at the hotel where he took his meals. One morning he said something to her which caused her to smile not unkindly, somewhat coquettishly to break a plate of toast over his upturned, serious, simple face, and to retreat to the kitchen. He followed her and emerged a few moments later, covered with more toast and victory. That day week they were married by a Justice of the Peace and returned to Poker Flat. I am aware that something more might be made of this episode, but I prefer to tell it as it was current at Sandy Bar—in the gulches and bar-rooms—where all sentiment was modified by a strong sense of humour.

Of their married felicity but little is known, perhaps for the

reason that Tennessee, then living with his partner, one day took occasion to say something to the bride on his own account, at which, it is said, she smiled not unkindly and chastely retreated—this time as far as Marysville, where Tennessee followed her, and where they went to housekeeping without the aid of a Justice of the Peace. Tennessee's Partner took the loss of his wife simply and seriously, as was his fashion. But to everybody's surprise, when Tennessee one day returned from Marysville, without his partner's wife—she having smiled and retreated with somebody else—Tennessee's Partner was the first man to shake his hand and greet him with affection. The boys who had gathered in the cañon to see the shooting were naturally indignant. Their indignation might have found vent in sarcasm, but for a certain look in Tennessee's Partner's eye that indicated a lack of humerous appreciation. In fact, he was a grave man, with a steady application to practical detail which was unpleasant in a difficulty.

Meanwhile a popular feeling against Tennessee had grown up on the Bar. He was known to be a gambler ; he was suspected to be a thief. In these suspicions Tennessee's Partner was equally compromised ; his continued intimacy with Tennessee after the affair above quoted could only be accounted for on the hypothesis of a co-partnership of crime. At last Tennessee's guilt became flagrant. One day he overtook a stranger on his way to Red Dog. The stranger afterwards related that Tennessee beguiled the time with interesting anecdote and reminiscence, but illogically concluded the interview in the following words :

" And now, young man, I'll trouble you for your knife, your pistols, and your money. You see, your wrappings might get you into trouble at Red Dog, and your money's a temptation to the evilly disposed. I think you said your address was San Francisco. I shall endeavour to call." It may be stated here that Tennessee had a fine flow of humour, which no business preoccupation could wholly subdue.

This exploit was his last. Red Dog and Sandy Bar made common cause against the highwayman. Tennessee was hunted in very much the same fashion as his prototype, the grizzly. As the toils closed around him he made a desperate dash through the Bar, emptying his revolver at the crowd before the Arcade Saloon, and so on up Grizzly Cañon ; but at its farther extremity he was stopped by a small man on a grey horse. The men looked at each other a moment in silence. Both were fearless, both self-possessed and independent ; and both types of a civilisation that in the seventeenth century would have been called heroic, but in the nineteenth simply " reckless."

" What have you got there ? I call," said Tennessee, quietly.

" Two bowers and an ace," said the stranger, as quietly, showing two revolvers and a bowie-knife.

"That takes me," returned Tennessee; and with this gambler's epigram he threw away his useless pistol and rode back with his captor.

It was a warm night. The cool breeze which usually sprang up with the going down of the sun behind the *chaparral*-crested mountain was that evening withheld from Sandy Bar. The little cañon was stifling with heated resinous odours, and the decaying driftwood on the Bar sent forth faint, sickening exhalations. The feverishness of day, and its fierce passions, still filled the camp. Lights moved restlessly along the bank of the river, striking no answering reflection from its tawny current. Against the blackness of the pines the windows of the old loft above the express-office stood out staringly bright, and through their curtainless panes the loungers below could see the forms of those who were even then deciding the fate of Tennessee. And above all this, etched on the dark firmament, rose the Sierra, remote and passionless, crowned with remoter passionless stars.

The trial of Tennessee was conducted as fairly as was consistent with a judge and jury who felt themselves to some extent obliged to justify in their verdict the previous irregularities of arrest and indictment. The law of Sandy Bar was implacable, but not vengeful. The excitement and personal feeling of the chase were over; with Tennessee safe in their hands they were ready to listen patiently to any defence, which they were already satisfied was insufficient. There being no doubt in their own minds, they were willing to give the prisoner the benefit of any that might exist. Secure in the hypothesis that he ought to be hanged, on general principles, they indulged him with more latitude of defence than his reckless hardihood seemed to ask. The Judge appeared to be more anxious than the prisoner, who, otherwise unconcerned, evidently took a grim pleasure in the responsibility he had created. "I don't take any hand in this yer game," had been his invariable but good-humoured reply to all questions. The Judge—who was also his captor—for a moment vaguely regretted that he had not shot him "on sight" that morning, but presently dismissed this human weakness as unworthy of the judicial mind. Nevertheless, when there was a tap at the door, and it was said that Tennessee's Partner was there on behalf of the prisoner, he was admitted at once without question. Perhaps the younger members of the jury, to whom the proceedings were becoming irksomely thoughtful, hailed him as a relief.

For he was not, certainly, an imposing figure. Short and stout, with a square face, sunburned into a preternatural redness, clad in a loose duck "jumper," and trousers streaked and splashed with red soil, his aspect in any circumstances would have been quaint, and was now even ridiculous. As he stooped to deposit at his feet a heavy carpet bag he was carrying, it became obvious, from partially

developed legends and inscriptions, that the material with which his trousers had been patched had been originally intended for a less ambitious covering. Yet he advanced with great gravity, and after having shaken the hand of each person in the room with laboured cordiality, he wiped his serious, perplexed face on a red bandanna handkerchief, a shade lighter than his complexion, laid his powerful hand upon the table to steady himself, and thus addressed the Judge :

" I was passin' by," he began, by way of apology, " and I thought I'd just step in and see how things was gittin' on with Tennessee thar—my pardner. It's a hot night. I disremember any sich weather before on the Bar."

He paused a moment, but nobody volunteering any other meteorological recollection, he again had recourse to his pocket-handkerchief, and for some moments mopped his face diligently.

" Have you anything to say in behalf of the prisoner ? " said the Judge, finally.

" Thet's it," said Tennessee's Partner, in a tone of relief. " I come yar as Tennessee's pardner—knowing him nigh on four year, off and on, wet and dry, in luck and out o'luck. His ways ain't allers my ways, but thar ain't any p'ints in that young man, thar ain't any liveliness as he's been up to, as I don't know. And you sez to me, sez you—confidential-like, and between man and man—sez you, ' Do you know anything in his behalf ? ' and I sez to you, sez I—confidential-like, as between man and man—' What should a man know of his pardner ? ' "

" Is this all you have to say ? " asked the Judge, impatiently, feeling, perhaps, that a dangerous sympathy of humour was beginning to humanise the Court.

" Thet's so," continued Tennessee's Partner. " It ain't for me to say anything agin him. And now, what's the case ? Here's Tennessee wants money, wants it bad, and doesn't like to ask it of his old pardner. Well, what does Tennessee do ? He lays for a stranger, and he fetches that stranger. And you lays for *him*, and you fetches *him*—and the honours is easy. And I put it to you, bein' a far-minded man, and to you, gentlemen, all, as far-minded men, ef this isn't so."

" Prisoner," said the Judge, interrupting, " have you any questions to ask this man ? "

" No ! no ! " continued Tennessee's Partner, hastily. " I play this yer hand alone. To come down to the bed-rock, it's just this : Tennessee, thar, has played it pretty rough and expensive-like on a stranger, and on this yer camp. And now, what's the fair thing ? Some would say more ; some would say less. Here's seventeen hundred dollars in coarse gold and a watch—it's about all my pile—and call it square ! " And before a hand could be raised to prevent him, he had emptied the contents of the carpet-bag upon the table.

For a moment his life was in jeopardy. One or two men sprang to their feet, several hands groped for hidden weapons, and a suggestion to " throw him from the window " was only overridden by a gesture from the Judge. Tennessee laughed. And apparently oblivious of the excitement, Tennessee's Partner improved the opportunity to mop his face again with his handkerchief.

When order was restored, and the man was made to understand, by the use of forcible figures and rhetoric, that Tennessee's offence could not be condoned by money, his face took a more serious and sanguinary hue, and those who were nearest to him noticed that his rough hand trembled slightly on the table. He hesitated a moment as he slowly returned the gold to the carpet-bag, as if he had not yet entirely caught the elevated sense of justice which swayed the tribunal, and was perplexed with the belief that he had not offered enough. Then he turned to the Judge, and saying, " This yer is a lone hand, played alone, and without my pardner," he bowed to the jury, and was about to withdraw, when the Judge called him back.

" If you have anything to say to Tennessee, you had better say it now."

For the first time that evening the eyes of the prisoner and his strange advocate met. Tennessee smiled, showed his white teeth, and, saying, " Euchred, old man ! " held out his hand.

Tennesee's Partner took it in his own, and saying, " I just dropped in as I was passin' to see how things was gittin' on," let the hand passively fall, and adding that " it was a warm night," again mopped his face with his handkerchief, and without another word withdrew.

The two men never again met each other alive. For the unparalleled insult of a bribe offered to Judge Lynch—who, whether bigoted, weak, or narrow, was at least incorruptible—firmly fixed in the mind of that mythical personage any wavering determination of Tennessee's fate, and at the break of day he was marched, closely guarded, to meet it at the top of Marley's Hill.

How he met it, how cool he was, how he refused to say anything, how perfect were the arrangements of the committee, were all duly reported, with the addition of a warning moral and example to all future evil-doers, in the *Red Dog Clarion*, by its editor, who was present, and to whose vigorous English I cheerfully refer the reader. But the beauty of that midsummer morning, the blessed amity of earth and air and sky, the awakened life of the free woods and hills, the joyous renewal and promise of Nature, and above all, the infinite serenity that thrilled through each, were not reported, as not being a part of the social lesson. And yet, when the weak and foolish deed was done, and a life, with its possibilities and responsibilities, had passed out of the misshapen thing that dangled between earth and sky, the birds sang, the flowers bloomed, the sun shone, as cheerily as before ; and possibly the *Red Dog Clarion* was right.

Tennessee's Partner was not in the group that surrounded the ominous tree. But as they turned to disperse, attention was drawn to the singular appearanceof a motionless donkey-cart halted at the side of the road. As they approached they at once recognised the venerable " Jenny " and the two-wheeled cart as the property of Tennessee's Partner—used by him in carrying dirt from his claim ; and a few paces distant the owner of the equipage himself, sitting under a buckeye-tree, wiping the perspiration from his glowing face. In answer to an inquiry, he said he had come for the body of the " diseased," if it was all the same to the committee. He didn't wish to " hurry anything " ; he could " wait." He was not working that day ; and when the gentlemen were done with the " diseased," he would take him. " Ef thar is any present," he added, in his simple, serious way, " as would care to jine in the fun'l, they kin come." Perhaps it was from a sense of humour, which I have already intimated was a feature of Sandy Bar—perhaps it was from something even better than that ; but two-thirds of the loungers accepted the invitation at once.

It was noon when the body of Tennessee was delivered into the hands of his partner. As the cart drew up to the fatal tree, we noticed that it contained a rough oblong box—apparently made from a section of sluicing—and half filled with bark and the tassels of pine. The cart was further decorated with slips of willow, and made fragrant with buckeye-blossoms. When the body was deposited in the box, Tennessee's Partner drew over it a piece of tarred canvas, and gravely mounting the narrow seat in front, with his feet upon the shafts, urged the little donkey forward. The equipage moved slowly on, at that decorous pace which was habitual with " Jenny " even under less solemn circumstances. The men—half curiously, half jestingly, but all good-humouredly—strolled along beside the cart : some in advance, some a little in the rear of the homely catafalque. But, whether from the narrowing of the road, or some present sense of decorum, as the cart passed on the company fell to the rear in couples, keeping step, and otherwise assuming the external show of a formal procession. Jack Folinsbee, who had at the outset played a funeral march in dumb-show upon an imaginary trombone, desisted, from a lack of sympathy and appreciation—not having, perhaps, your true humourist's capacity to be content with the enjoyment of his own fun.

The way led through Grizzly Cañon—by this time clothed in funeral drapery and shadows. The redwoods, burying their moccasined feet in the red soil, stood in Indian file along the track, trailing an uncouth benediction from their bending boughs upon the passing bier. A hare, surprised into helpless inactivity, sat upright and pulsating in the ferns by the roadside as the *cortège* went by. Squirrels hastened to gain a secure outlook from higher boughs, and the blue-jays, spreading their wings, fluttered before them like

outriders, until the outskirts of Sandy Bar were reached, and the solitary cabin of Tennessee's Partner.

Viewed under more favourable circumstances, it would not have been a cheerful place. The unpicturesque site, the rude and unlovely outlines, the unsavoury details, which distinguish the nest-building of the California miner, were all here, with the dreariness of decay superadded. A few paces from the cabin there was a rough enclosure, which, in the brief days of Tennessee's Partner's matrimonial felicity, had been used as a garden, but was now overgrown with fern. As we approached it we were surprised to find that what we had taken for a recent attempt at cultivation was the broken soil about an open grave.

The cart was halted before the enclosure, and, rejecting the offers of assistance with the same air of simple self-reliance he had displayed throughout, Tennessee's Partner lifted the rough coffin on his back, and deposited it, unaided, within the shallow grave. He then nailed down the board which served as a lid, and, mounting the little mound of earth beside it, took off his hat, and slowly mopped his face with his handkerchief. This the crowd felt was a preliminary to speech, and they disposed themselves variously on stumps and boulders, and sat expectant.

"When a man," began Tennessee's Partner, slowly, "has been running free all day, what's the natural thing for him to do? Why, to come home! And if he ain't in a condition to go home, what can his best friend do? Why, bring him home! And here's Tennessee has been running free, and we brings him home from his wandering." He paused, and picked up a fragment of quartz, rubbed it thoughtfully on his sleeve, and went on: "It ain't the first time that I've packed him on my back, as you see'd me now. It ain't the first time that I brought him to this yer cabin when he couldn't help himself; it ain't the first time that I and 'Jinny' have waited for him on yon hill, and picked him up and so fetched him home, when he couldn't speak, and didn't know me. And now that it's the last time, why—" he paused, and rubbed the quartz gently on his sleeve—"you see, it's sort of rough on his pardner. And now, gentlemen," he added, abruptly, picking up his long-handled shovel, "the fun'l's over, and my thanks, and Tennessee's thanks, to you for your trouble."

Resisting any proffers of assistance he began to fill in the grave, turning his back upon the crowd, that after a few moments' hesitation gradually withdrew. As they crossed the little ridge that hid Sandy Bar from view, some, looking back, thought they could see Tennessee's Partner, his work done, sitting upon the grave, his shovel between his knees, and his face buried in his red bandanna handkerchief. But it was argued by others that you couldn't tell his face from his handkerchief at that distance, and this point remained undecided.

In the reaction that followed the feverish excitement of that day, Tennessee's Partner was not forgotten. A secret investigation had cleared him of any complicity in Tennessee's guilt, and left only a suspicion of his general sanity. Sandy Bar made a point of calling on him and proffering various uncouth but well-meant kindnesses. But from that day his rude health and great strength seemed visibly to decline, and when the rainy season fairly set in, and the tiny grass-blades were beginning to peep from the rocky mound above Tennessee's grave, he took to his bed.

One night, when the pines beside the cabin were swaying in the storm, and trailing their slender fingers over the roof, and the roar and rush of the swollen river were heard below, Tennessee's Partner lifted his head from the pillow, saying, "It is time to go for Tennessee; I must put 'Jinny' in the cart," and would have risen from his bed but for the restraint of his attendant. Struggling, he still pursued his singular fancy: "There, now, steady, 'Jinny'—steady, old girl. How dark it is! Look out for the ruts—and look out for him, too, old gal! Sometimes, you know, when he's blind drunk, he drops down right in the trail. Keep on straight up to the pine on the top of the hill. Thar—I told you so!—thar he is—coming this way, too—all by himself, sober, and his face a-shining. Tennessee! Pardner!"

And so they met.

MIGGLES

FRANCIS BRET HARTE

WE were eight, including the driver. We had not spoken during the passage of the last six miles, since the jolting of the heavy vehicle over the roughening road had spoiled the Judge's last poetical quotation. The tall man beside the Judge was asleep, his arm passed through the swaying strap and his head resting upon it—altogether a limp, helpless-looking object, as if he had hanged himself and been cut down too late. The French lady on the back seat was asleep too, yet in a half-conscious propriety of attitude, shown even in the disposition of the handkerchief which she held to her forehead, and which partially veiled her face. The lady from Virginia City, travelling with her husband, had long since lost all individuality in a wild confusion of ribbons, veils, furs, and shawls. There was no sound but the rattling of wheels and the dash of rain upon the roof. Suddenly the stage stopped, and we became dimly aware of voices.

The driver was evidently in the midst of an exciting colloquy with some one in the road—a colloquy of which such fragments as "bridge gone," "twenty feet of water," "can't pass," were occasionally distinguishable above the storm. Then came a lull, and a mysterious voice from the road shouted the parting adjuration:

"Try Miggles's."

We caught a glimpse of our leaders, as the vehicle slowly turned, of a horseman vanishing through the rain, and we were evidently on our way to Miggles's.

Who and where was Miggles? The Judge, our authority, did not remember the name, and he knew the country thoroughly. The Washoe traveller thought Miggles must keep an hotel. We only knew that we were stopped by high water in front and rear, and that Miggles was our rock of refuge. A ten minutes' splashing through a tangle bye-road, scarcely wide enough for the stage, and we drew up before a barred and boarded gate in a wide stone wall or fence about eight feet high. Evidently Miggles's, and evidently Miggles did not keep an hotel.

The driver got down and tried the gate. It was securely locked.

"Miggles! O Miggles!"

No answer.

"Migg-ells! You Miggles!" continued the driver, with rising wrath.

"Migglesy!" joined in the expressman, persuasively. "O Miggy! Mig!"

But no reply came from the apparently insensate Miggles. The Judge, who had finally got the window down, put his head out, and propounded a series of questions, which, if answered categorically, would have undoubtedly elucidated the whole mystery, but which the driver evaded by replying that "if we didn't want to sit in the coach all night, we had better rise up and sing out for Miggles."

So we rose up and called on Miggles in chorus; then separately. And when we had finished a Hibernian fellow-passenger from the roof called for "Maygells!" whereat we all laughed. While we were laughing the driver cried "Shoo!"

We listened. To our infinite amazement the chorus of "Miggles" was repeated from the other side of the wall, even to the final and supplemental "Maygells."

"Extraordinary echo," said the Judge.

"Extraordinary d——d skunk!" roared the driver, contemptuously. "Come out of that, Miggles, and show yourself! Be a man, Miggles! Don't hide in the dark; I wouldn't if I were you, Miggles," continued Yuba Bill, now dancing about in an excess of fury.

"Miggles!" continued the voice, "Oh Miggles!"

"My good man! Mr. Myghail!" said the Judge, softening the asperities of the name as much as possible. "Consider the in-

hospitality of refusing shelter from the inclemency of the weather to helpless females. Really, my dear sir——" But a succession of "Miggles," ending in a burst of laughter, drowned his voice.

Yuba Bill hesitated no longer. Taking a heavy stone from the road he battered down the gate, and, with the expressman, entered the enclosure. We followed. Nobody was to be seen. In the gathering darkness all that we could distinguish was that we were in a garden—from the rose-bushes that scattered over us a minute spray from their dripping leaves—and before a long, rambling wooden building.

"Do you know this Miggles?" asked the Judge of Yuba Bill.

"No; nor don't want to," said Bill, shortly, who felt the Pioneer Stage Company insulted in his person by the contumacious Miggles.

"But, my dear sir," expostulated the Judge, as he thought of the barred gate.

"Lookee here," said Yuba Bill, with fine irony, "hadn't you better go back and sit in the coach till yer introduced? I'm going in"; and he pushed open the door of the building.

A long room, lighted only by the embers of a fire that was dying on the large hearth at its further extremity; the walls curiously papered, and the flickering firelight bringing out its grotesque pattern; somebody sitting in a large arm-chair by the fireplace. All this we saw as we crowded together into the room, after the driver and expressman.

"Hello, be you Miggles?" said Yuba Bill to the solitary occupant.

The figure neither spoke nor stirred. Yuba Bill walked wrathfully towards it, and turned the eye of his coach-lantern upon its face. It was a man's face, prematurely old and wrinkled, with very large eyes, in which there was that expression of perfectly gratuitous solemnity which I had sometimes seen in an owl's. The large eyes wandered from Bill's face to the lantern, and finally fixed their gaze on that luminous object, without further recognition.

Bill restrained himself with an effort.

"Miggles! Be you deaf? You ain't dumb, anyhow, you know"; and Yuba Bill shook the insensate figure by the shoulder.

To our great dismay, as Bill removed his hand, the venerable stranger apparently collapsed, sinking into half his size and an undistinguishable heap of clothing.

"Well, dern my skin," said Bill, looking appealingly at us, and hopelessly retiring from the contest.

The Judge now stepped forward, and we lifted the mysterious invertebrate back into his original position. Bill was dismissed with the lantern to reconnoitre outside, for it was evident that from the helplessness of this solitary man there must be attendants near at hand, and we all drew around the fire. The Judge, who had regained

his authority, and had never lost his conversational amiability—standing before us with his back to the hearth—charged us, as an imaginary jury, as follows:

"It is evident that either our distinguished friend here has reached that condition described by Shakespeare as 'the sere and yellow leaf,' or has suffered some premature abatement of his mental and physical faculties. Whether he is really the Miggles——"

Here he was interrupted by "Miggles! Oh Miggles! Migglesy! Mig!" and, in fact, the whole chorus of Miggles, in very much the same key as it had once before been delivered unto us.

We gazed at each other for a moment in some alarm. The Judge, in particular, vacated his position quickly, as the voice seemed to come directly over his shoulder. The cause, however, was soon discovered in a large magpie who was perched upon a shelf over the fireplace, and who immediately relapsed into a sepulchral silence, which contrasted singularly with his previous volubility. It was, undoubtedly, his voice which we had heard in the road, and our friend in the chair was not responsible for the discourtesy. Yuba Bill, who re-entered the room after an unsuccessful search, was loth to accept the explanation, and still eyed the helpless sitter with suspicion. He had found a shed in which he had put up his horses, but he came back dripping and sceptical. "Thar ain't nobody but him within ten miles of the shanty, and that 'ar d——d old skeesicks knows it."

But the faith of the majority proved to be securely based. Bill had scarcely ceased growling before we heard a quick step upon the porch, the trailing of a wet skirt, the door was flung open, and with a flash of white teeth, a sparkle of dark eyes, and an utter absence of ceremony or diffidence, a young woman entered, shut the door, and, panting, leaned back against it.

"Oh, if you please, I'm Miggles!"

And this was Miggles! This bright-eyed, full-throated, young woman, whose wet gown of coarse blue stuff could not hide the beauty of the feminine curves to which it clung; from the chestnut crown of whose head, topped by a man's oil-skin sou'wester, to the little feet and ankles, hidden somewhere in the recesses of her boy's brogans, all was grace—this was Miggles, laughing at us, too, in the most airy, frank, off-hand manner imaginable.

"You see, boys," said she, quite out of breath, and holding one little hand against her side, quite unheeding the speechless discomfiture of our party, or the complete demoralisation of Yuba Bill, whose features had relaxed into an expression of gratuitous and imbecile cheerfulness—"you see, boys, I was mor'n two miles away when you passed down the road. I thought you might pull up here, and so I ran the whole way, knowing nobody was home but Jim—and—and—I'm out of breath—and—that lets me out."

And here Miggles caught her dripping oil-skin hat from her head,

with a mischievous swirl that scattered a shower of rain-drops over us; attempted to put back her hair; dropped two hair-pins in the attempt; laughed and sat down beside Yuba Bill, with her hands crossed lightly on her lap. The Judge recovered himself first, and essayed an extravagant compliment.

"I'll trouble you for that thar har-pin," said Miggles, gravely. Half-a-dozen hands were eagerly stretched forward; the missing hair-pin was restored to its fair owner; and Miggles, crossing the room, looked keenly in the face of the invalid. The solemn eyes looked back at hers with an expression we had never seen before. Life and intelligence seemed to struggle back into the rugged face. Miggles laughed again—it was a singularly eloquent laugh—and turned her black eyes and white teeth once more towards us.

"This afflicted person is——" hesitated the Judge.

"Jim," said Miggles.

"Your father?"

"No."

"Brother?"

"No."

"Husband?" Miggles darted a quick, half-defiant glance at the two lady passengers who I had noticed did not participate in the general masculine admiration of Miggles, and said, gravely, "No: it's Jim."

There was an awkward pause. The lady passengers moved closer to each other; the Washoe husband looked abstractedly at the fire; and the tall man apparently turned his eyes inward for self-support at this emergency. But Miggles's laugh, which was very infectious, broke the silence. "Come," she said briskly, "you must be hungry. Who'll bear a hand to help me get tea?"

She had no lack of volunteers. In a few moments Yuba Bill was engaged like Caliban in bearing logs for this Miranda; the express-man was grinding coffee on the verandah; to myself, the arduous duty of slicing bacon was assigned; and the Judge lent each man his good-humoured and voluble counsel. And when Miggles, assisted by the Judge and our Hibernian "deck passenger," set the table with all the available crockery, we had become quite joyous in spite of the rain that beat against windows, the wind that whirled down the chimney, the two ladies who whispered together in the corner, or the magpie who uttered a satirical and croaking commentary on their conversation from his perch above. In the now bright, blazing fire we could see that the walls were papered with illustrated journals, arranged with feminine taste and discrimination. The furniture was extemporised and adapted from candle-boxes and packing-cases, and covered with gay calico, or the skin of some animal. The armchair of the helpless Jim was an ingenious variation of a flour-barrel. There was neatness, and

even a taste for the picturesque, to be seen in the few details of the long low room.

The meal was a culinary success. But more, it was a social triumph—chiefly, I think, owing to the rare tact of Miggles in guiding the conversation, asking all the questions herself, yet bearing throughout a frankness that rejected the idea of any concealment on her own part, so that we talked of ourselves, of our prospects, of the journey, of the weather, of each other—of everything but our host and hostess. It must be confessed that Miggles's conversation was never elegant, rarely grammatical, and that at times she employed expletives, the use of which had generally been yielded to our sex. But they were delivered with such a lighting up of teeth and eyes, and were usually followed by a laugh—a laugh peculiar to Miggles—so frank and honest, that it seemed to clear the moral atmosphere.

Once during the meal we heard a noise like the rubbing of a heavy body against the outer walls of the house. This was shortly followed by a scratching and sniffing at the door. "That's Joaquin," said Miggles, in reply to our questioning glances; "would you like to see him?" Before we could answer she had opened the door and disclosed a half-grown grizzly, who instantly raised himself on his haunches, with his forepaws hanging down in the popular attitude of mendicancy, and looked admiringly at Miggles, with a very singular resemblance in his manner to Yuba Bill. "That's my watch-dog." said Miggles in explanation. "Oh, he don't bite," she added, as the two lady passengers fluttered into a corner. "Does he, old Tuppy?" (the latter remark being addressed directly to the sagacious Joaquin). "I tell you what, boys," continued Miggles, after she had fed and closed the door on *Ursa Minor*, "you were in big luck that Joaquin wasn't hanging round when you dropped in to-night."

"Where was he?" asked the Judge.

"With me," said Miggles.

"Lord love you! he trots round with me nights like as if he was a man."

We were silent for a few moments, and listened to the wind. Perhaps we all had the same picture before us—of Miggles walking through the rainy woods with her savage guardian at her side. The Judge, I remember, said something about Una and her lion; but Miggles received it, as she did other compliments, with quiet gravity. Whether she was altogether unconscious of the admiration she excited—she could hardly have been oblivious of Yuba Bill's adoration—I know not, but her very frankness suggested a perfect sexual equality that was cruelly humiliating to the younger members of our party.

The incident of the bear did not add anything in Miggle's favour to the opinions of those of her own sex who were present. In fact,

the repast over, a chillness radiated from the two lady passengers that no pine-boughs brought in by Yuba Bill and cast as a sacrifice upon the hearth could wholly overcome. Miggles felt it; and, suddenly declaring that it was time "to turn in," offered to show the ladies to their bed in an adjoining room. "You, boys, will have to camp out here by the fire as well as you can," she added, "for thar ain't but the one room."

Our sex—by which, my dear sir, I allude of course to the stronger portion of humanity—has been generally relieved from the imputation of curiosity or a fondness for gossip. Yet I am constrained to say, that hardly had the door closed on Miggles than we crowded together, whispering, snickering, smiling, and exchanging suspicions, surmises, and a thousand speculations in regard to our pretty hostess and her singular companion. I fear that we even hustled that imbecile paralytic who sat like a voiceless Memnon in our midst, gazing with the serene indifference of the Past in his passionless eyes upon our wordy counsels. In the midst of an exciting discussion the door opened again and Miggles re-entered.

But not, apparently, the same Miggles who a few hours before had flashed upon us. Her eyes were downcast, and as she hesitated for a moment on the threshold, with a blanket on her arm, she seemed to have left behind her the frank fearlessness which had charmed us a moment before. Coming into the room, she drew a low stool beside the paralytic's chair, sat down, drew the blanket over her shoulders, and saying, "If it's all the same to you, boys, as we're rather crowded, I'll stop here to-night," took the invalid's withered hand in her own and turned her eyes upon the dying fire. An instinctive feeling that this was only premonitory to more confidential relations, and perhaps some shame at our previous curiosity, kept us silent. The rain still beat upon the roof, wandering gusts of wind stirred the embers into momentary brightness, until, in a lull of the elements, Miggles suddenly lifted up her head, and throwing her hair over her shoulder, turned her face upon the group and asked:

"Is there any of you that knows me?" There was no reply.

"Think again. I lived at Marysville in '53. Everybody knew me there, and everybody had the right to know me. I kept the Polka Saloon until I came to live with Jim. That's six years ago. Perhaps I've changed some."

The absence of recognition may have disconcerted her. She turned her head to the fire again, and it was some seconds before she again spoke, and then more rapidly:

"Well, you see I thought some of you must have known me. There's no great harm done any way. What I was going to say was this: Jim here"—she took his hand in both of hers as she spoke—"used to know me, if you didn't, and spent a heap of money upon me. I reckon he spent all he had. And one day—it's six years ago

this winter—Jim came into my back room, sat down on my sofy, like as you see him in that chair, and never moved again without help. He was struck all of a heap, and never seemed to know what ailed him. The doctors came, and said as how it was caused all along of his way of life—for Jim was mighty free and wild like—and that he would never get better, and couldn't last long any way. They advised me to send him to 'Frisco, to the hospital, for he was no good to any one and would be a baby all his life. Perhaps it was something in Jim's eye, perhaps it was that I never had a baby, but I said 'No.' I was rich then, for I was popular with everybody—gentlemen like yourself, sir, came to see me—and I sold out my business and bought this yer place because it was sort of out of the way of travel, you see, and I brought my baby here."

With a woman's intuitive tact and poetry she had, as she spoke, slowly shifted her position so as to bring the mute figure of the ruined man between her and her audience, hiding in the shadow behind it, as if she offered it as a tacit apology for her actions. Silent and expressionless, it yet spoke for her; helpless, crushed, and smitten with the Divine thunderbolt, it still stretched an invisible arm around her.

Hidden in the darkness, but still holding his hand, she went on:

"It was a long time before I could get the hang of things about yer, for I was used to company and excitement. I couldn't get any woman to help me, and a man I dursen't trust; but what with the Indians hereabout, who'd do odd jobs for me, and having everything sent from the North Fork, Jim and I managed to worry through. The doctor would run up from Sacramento once in a while. He'd ask to see 'Miggles's baby,' as he called Jim, and when he'd go away, he'd say, 'Miggles, you're a trump—God bless you'; and it didn't seem so lonely after that. But the last time he was here he said as he opened the door to go, 'Do you know, Miggles, your baby will grow up to be a man yet, and an honour to his mother! but not here, Miggles, not here!' And I thought he went away sad—and—and——" and here Miggles's voice and head were somehow both lost completely in the shadow.

"The folks about here are very kind," said Miggles after a pause, coming a little into the light again. "The men from the Fork used to hang around here, until they found they wasn't wanted, and the women are kind—and don't call. I was pretty lonely until I picked up Joaquin in the woods yonder one day, when he wasn't so high, and taught him to beg for his dinner; and then thar's Polly—that's the magpie—she knows no end of tricks, and makes it quite sociable of evenings with her talk, and so I don't feel like as I was the only living being about the ranch. And Jim here," said Miggles, with her old laugh again, and coming out quite into the firelight, "Jim—why, boys, you would admire to see how much he knows for a man like him. Sometimes I bring him flowers, and he looks

at 'em just as natural as if he knew 'em ; and times, when we're sitting alone, I read him those things on the wall. Why, Lord ! " said Miggles, with her frank laugh, " I've read him that whole side of the house this winter. There never was such a man for reading as Jim."

" Why," asked the Judge, " do you not marry this man to whom you have devoted your youthful life ? "

" Well, you see," said Miggles, " it would be playing it rather low down on Jim to take advantage of his being so helpless. And then, too, if we were man and wife, now, we'd both know that I was *bound* to do what I do now of my own accord."

" But you are young yet and attractive——"

" It's getting late," said Miggles gravely, " and you'd better all turn in. Good-night, boys " ; and, throwing the blanket over her head, Miggles laid herself down beside Jim's chair, her head pillowed on the low stool that held his feet, and spoke no more. The fire slowly faded from the hearth ; we each sought our blankets in silence ; and presently here was no sound in the long room but the pattering of the rain upon the roof and the heavy breathing of the sleepers.

It was nearly morning when I awoke from a troubled dream. The storm had passed, the stars were shining, and through the shutterless window the full moon, lifting itself over the solemn pines without, looked into the room. It touched the lonely figure in the chair with an infinite compassion, and seemed to baptize with a shining flood the lowly head of the woman whose hair, as in the sweet old story, bathed the feet of Him she loved. It even lent a kindly poetry to the rugged outline of Yuba Bill, half reclining on his elbow between them and his passengers, with savagely patient eyes keeping watch and ward. And then I fell asleep, and only woke at broad day, with Yuba Bill standing over me, and " All aboard " ringing in my ears.

Coffee was waiting for us on the table, but Miggles was gone. We wandered about the house, and lingered long after the horses were harnessed, but she did not return. It was evident that she wished to avoid a formal leave-taking, and had so left us to depart as we had come. After we had helped the ladies into the coach we returned to the house, and solemnly shook hands with the paralytic Jim, as solemnly settling him back into position after each handshake. Then we looked for the last time around the long, low room, at the stool where Miggles had sat, and slowly took our seats in the waiting coach. The whip cracked and we were off !

But as we reached the high road Bill's dexterous hand laid the six horses back on their haunches, and the stage stopped with a jerk. For there, on a little eminence beside the road, stood Miggles, her hair flying, her eyes sparkling, her white handkerchief waving, and her white teeth flashing a last " good-bye." We waved our

hats in return. And then Yuba Bill, as if fearful of further fascination, madly lashed his horses forward, and we sank back in our seats. We exchanged not a word until we reached the North Fork and the stage drew up at the Independence House. Then, the Judge leading, we walked into the bar-room and took our places gravely at the bar.

"Are your glasses charged, gentlemen?" said the Judge, solemnly taking off his white hat. They were.

"Well, then, here's to *Miggles*; GOD BLESS HER!"

Perhaps He had. Who knows?

THE LUCK OF ROARING CAMP

FRANCIS BRET HARTE

THERE was commotion in Roaring Camp. It could not have been a fight, for in 1850 that was not novel enough to have called together the entire settlement. The ditches and claims were not only deserted, but "Tuttle's Grocery" had contributed its gamblers, who, it will be remembered, calmly continued their game the day that French Pete and Kanaka Joe shot each other to death over the bar in the front room. The whole camp was collected before a rude cabin on the outer edge of the clearing. Conversation was carried on in a low tone, but the name of a woman was frequently repeated. It was a name familiar enough in the camp—"Cherokee Sal."

Perhaps the less said of her the better. She was a coarse, and, it is to be feared, a very sinful woman. But at that time she was the only woman in Roaring Camp, and was just then lying in sore extremity, when she most needed the ministration of her own sex. Dissolute, abandoned, and irreclaimable, she was yet suffering a martyrdom hard enough to bear even when veiled by sympathising womanhood, but now terrible in her loneliness. The primal curse had come to her in that original isolation which must have made the punishment of the first transgression so dreadful. It was, perhaps, part of the expiation of her sin that, at a moment when she most lacked her sex's intuitive tenderness and care, she met only the half-contemptuous faces of her masculine associates. Yet a few of the spectators were, I think, touched by her sufferings. Sandy Tipton thought it was "rough on Sal," and, in the contemplation of her condition, for a moment rose superior to the fact that he had

an ace and two bowers in his sleeve.

It will be seen, also, that the situation was novel. Deaths were by no means uncommon in Roaring Camp, but a birth was a new thing. People had been dismissed the camp effectively, finally, and with no possibility of return ; but this was the first time that anybody had been introduced *ab initio*. Hence the excitement.

"You go in there, Stumpy," said a prominent citizen known as "Kentuck," addressing one of the loungers. "Go in there, and see what you kin do. You've had experience in them things."

Perhaps there was a fitness in the selection. Stumpy, in other climes, had been the putative head of two families ; in fact, it was owing to some legal informality in these proceedings that Roaring Camp—a city of refuge—was indebted for his company. The crowd approved the choice, and Stumpy was wise enough to bow to the majority. The door closed on the extempore surgeon and midwife, and Roaring Camp sat down outside, smoked its pipe, and awaited the issue.

The assemblage numbered about a hundred men. One or two of these were actual fugitives from justice, some were criminal, and all were reckless. Physically, they exhibited no indication of their past lives and character. The greatest scamp had a Raphael face, with a profusion of blond hair ; Oakhurst, a gambler, had the melancholy air and intellectual abstraction of a Hamlet ; the coolest and most courageous man was scarcely over five feet in height, with a soft voice and an embarrassed, timid manner. The term "roughs" applied to them was a distinction rather than a definition. Perhaps in the minor details of fingers, toes, ears, etc., the camp may have been deficient ; but these slight omissions did not detract from their aggregate force. The strongest man had but three fingers on his right hand ; the best shot had but one eye.

Such was the physical aspect of the men that were dispersed around the cabin. The camp lay in a triangular valley, between two hills and a river. The only outlet was a steep trail over the summit of a hill that faced the cabin, now illuminated by the rising moon. The suffering woman might have seen it from the rude bunk whereon she lay—seen it winding like a silver thread, until it was lost in the stars above.

A fire of withered pine-boughs added sociability to the gathering. By degrees the natural levity of Roaring Camp returned. Bets were freely offered and taken regarding the result. Three to five that "Sal would get through with it" ; even that the child would survive ; side bets as to the sex and complexion of the coming stranger. In the midst of an excited discussion an exclamation came from those nearest the door, and the camp stopped to listen. Above the swaying and moaning of the pines, the swift rush of the river, and the crackling of the fire, rose a sharp, querulous cry—a cry unlike anything heard before in the camp. The pines stopped

moaning, the river ceased to rush, and the fire to crackle. It seemed as if nature had stopped to listen too.

The camp rose to its feet as one man! It was proposed to explode a barrel of gunpowder, but, in consideration of the situation of the mother, better counsels prevailed, and only a few revolvers were discharged; for, whether owing to the rude surgery of the camp, or some other reason, Cherokee Sal was sinking fast. Within an hour she had climbed, as it were, that rugged road that led to the stars, and so passed out of Roaring Camp, its sin and shame, for ever. I do not think that the announcement disturbed them much, except in speculation as to the fate of the child. "Can he live now?" was asked of Stumpy. The answer was doubtful. The only other being of Cherokee Sal's sex and maternal condition in the settlement was an ass. There was some conjecture as to fitness, but the experiment was tried. It was less problematical than the ancient treatment of Romulus and Remus, and apparently as successful.

When these details were completed, which exhausted another hour, the door was opened, and the anxious crowd of men, who had already formed themselves into a queue, entered in single file. Beside the low bunk or shelf on which the figure of the mother was starkly outlined below the blankets, stood a pine table. On this a candle-box was placed, and within it, swathed in staring red flannel, lay the last arrival at Roaring Camp. Beside the candle-box was placed a hat. Its use was soon indicated. "Gentlemen," said Stumpy, with a singular mixture of authority and *ex officio* complacency—"Gentlemen will please pass in at the front door, round the table, and out at the back door. Them as wishes to contribute anything toward the orphan will find a hat handy." The first man entered with his hat on; he uncovered, however, as he looked about him, and so, unconsciously, set an example to the next. In such communities good and bad actions are catching. As the procession filed in, comments were audible—criticism addressed, perhaps, rather to Stumpy, in the character of showman—"Is that him?" "Mighty small specimen!" "Hasn't mor'n got the colour"? "Ain't bigger nor a derringer." The contributions were as characteristic: A silver tobacco-box; a doubloon; a navy revolver, silver mounted; a gold specimen; a very beautifully embroidered lady's handkerchief (from Oakhurst the gambler); a diamond breastpin; a diamond ring (suggested by the pin with the remark from the giver that he "saw that pin and went two diamonds better"); a slung shot; a Bible (contributor not detected); a golden spur; a silver teaspoon (the initials, I regret to say, were not the giver's); a pair of surgeon's shears; a lancet; a Bank of England note for £5; and about 200 dols. in loose gold and silver coin. During these proceedings Stumpy maintained a silence as impassive as the dead on his left, a gravity as inscrutable as that of the newly born on his right. Only one incident occurred to break

the monotony of the curious procession. As Kentuck bent over the candle-box, half curiously, the child turned, and, in a spasm of pain, caught at his groping finger, and held it fast for a moment. Kentuck looked foolish and embarrassed. Something like a blush tried to assert itself in his weather-beaten cheek. "The d—d little cuss!" he said, as he extricated his finger, with, perhaps, more tenderness and care than he might have been deemed capable of showing. He held that finger a little part from its fellows as he went out, and examined it curiously. The examination provoked the same original remark in regard to the child. In fact he seemed to enjoy repeating it. "He rastled with my finger," he remarked to Tipton, holding up the member; "the d—d little cuss!"

It was four o'clock before the camp sought repose. A light burnt in the cabin where the watchers sat, for Stumpy did not go to bed that night. Nor did Kentuck. He drank quite freely, and related with great gusto his experience, invariably ending with his characteristic condemnation of the newcomer. It seemed to relieve him of any unjust implication of sentiment, and Kentuck had the weaknesses of the nobler sex. When everybody else had gone to bed, he walked down to the river and whistled reflectingly. Then he walked up the gulch, past the cabin, still whistling with demonstrative unconcern. At a large redwood-tree he paused and retraced his steps, and again passed the cabin. Halfway down to the river's bank he again paused, and then returned and knocked at the door. It was opened by Stumpy. "How goes it?" said Kentuck looking past Stumpy towards the candle-box. "All serene," replied Stumpy. "Anything up?" "Nothing." There was a pause—an embarrassing one—Stumpy still holding the door. Then Kentuck had recourse to his finger, which he held up to Stumpy, "Rastled with it—the d—d little cuss!" he said, and retired.

The next day Cherokee Sal had such rude sepulture as Roaring Camp afforded. After her body had been committed to the hillside there was a formal meeting of the camp to discuss what should be done with her infant. A resolution to adopt it was unanimous and enthusiastic. But an animated discussion in regard to the manner and feasibility of providing for its wants at once sprung up. It was remarkable that the argument partook of none of those fierce personalities with which discussions were usually conducted at Roaring Camp. Tipton proposed that they should send the child to Red Dog—a distance of forty miles—where female attention could be procured. But the unlucky suggestion met with fierce and unanimous opposition. It was evident that no plan which entailed parting with their new acquisition would for a moment be entertained. "Besides," said Tom Ryder, "them fellows at Red Dog would swap it, and ring in somebody else on us." A disbelief in the honesty of other camps prevailed at Roaring Camp as in other places.

The introduction of a female nurse in the camp also met with objection. It was argued that no decent woman could be prevailed to accept Roaring Camp as her home, and the speaker urged that "they didn't want any more of the other kind." This unkind allusion to the defunct mother, harsh as it may seem, was the first spasm of propriety—the first symptom of the camp's regeneration. Stumpy advanced nothing. Perhaps he felt a certain delicacy in interfering with the selection of a possible successor in office. But when questioned he averred stoutly that he and "Jinny"—the mammal before alluded to—could manage to rear the child. There was something original, independent, and heroic about the plan that pleased the camp. Stumpy was retained. Certain articles were sent for to Sacramento. "Mind," said the treasurer, as he pressed a bag of gold-dust into the expressman's hand, "the best that can be got—lace, you know, and filigree-work and frills; d—the cost!"

Strange to say, the child thrived. Perhaps the invigorating climate of the mountain camp was compensation for material deficiences. Nature took the foundling to her broader breast. In that rare atmosphere of the Sierra foothills—that air pungent with balsamic odour, that ethereal cordial at once bracing and exhilarating—he may have found food and nourishment, or a subtle chemistry that transmuted asses' milk to lime and phosphorus. Stumpy inclined to the belief that it was the latter and good nursing. "Me and that ass," he would say, "has been father and mother to him! Don't you," he would add, apostrophising the helpless bundle before him, "never go back on us."

By the time he was a month old the necessity of giving him a name became apparent. He had generally been known as "the Kid," "Stumpy's boy," "the Cayote" (an allusion to his vocal powers), and even by Kentuck's endearing diminutive of "the d—d little cuss." But these were felt to be vague and unsatisfactory, and were at last dismissed under another influence. Gamblers and adventurers are generally superstitious, and Oakhurst one day declared that the baby had brought "the luck" to Roaring Camp. It was certain that of late they had been successful. "Luck" was the name agreed upon, with the prefix of Tommy for greater convenience. No allusion was made to the mother, and the father was unknown. "It's better," said the philosophical Oakhurst, "to take a fresh deal all round. Call him luck, and start him fair." A day was accordingly set apart for the christening. What was meant by this ceremony the reader may imagine, who has already gathered some idea of the reckless irreverence of Roaring Camp. The master of ceremonies was one "Boston," a noted wag, and the occasion seemed to promise the greatest facetiousness. This ingenious satirist had spent two days in preparing a burlesque of the church service, with pointed local allusions. The choir was

properly trained, and Sandy Tipton was to stand godfather. But after the procession had marched to the grove with music and banners, and the child had been deposited before a mock altar, Stumpy stepped before the expectant crowd. "It ain't my style to spoil fun, boys," said the little man stoutly, eyeing the faces around him, "but it strikes me that this thing ain't exactly on the squar. It's playing it pretty low down on this yer baby to ring in fun on him that he ain't going to understand. And ef there's going to be any godfathers round, I'd like to see who's got any better rights than me." A silence followed Stumpy's speech. To the credit of all humourists be it said that the first man to acknowledge its justice was the satirist, thus stopped of his fun. "But," said Stumpy quickly, following up his advantage, "we're here for a christening, and we'll have it. I proclaim you Thomas Luck, according to the laws of the United States and the State of California, so help me God." It was the first time that the name of the Deity had been uttered otherwise than profanely in the camp. The form of christening was perhaps even more ludicrous than the satirist had conceived; but, strangely enough, nobody saw it and nobody laughed. "Tommy" was christened as seriously as he would have been under a Christian roof, and cried and was comforted in as orthodox fashion.

And so the work of regeneration began in Roaring Camp. Almost imperceptibly a change came over the settlement. The cabin assigned to "Tommy Luck"—or "The Luck," as he was more frequently called—first showed signs of improvement. It was kept scrupulously clean and whitewashed. Then it was boarded, clothed, and papered. The rosewood cradle—packed eighty miles by mule—had, in Stumpy's way of putting it, "sorter killed the rest of the furniture." So the rehabilitation of the cabin became a necessity. The men who were in the habit of lounging in at Stumpy's to see "how The Luck got on" seemed to appreciate the change, and, in self-defence, the rival establishment of "Tuttle's Grocery" bestirred itself and imported a carpet and mirrors. The reflections of the latter on the appearance of Roaring Camp tended to produce stricter habits of personal cleanliness. Again, Stumpy imposed a kind of quarantine upon those who aspired to the honour and privilege of holding "The Luck." It was a cruel mortification to Kentuck—who, in the carelessness of a large nature and the habits of frontier life, had begun to regard all garments as a second cuticle, which, like a snake's, only sloughed off through decay—to be debarred this privilege from certain prudential reasons. Yet such was the subtle influence of innovation that he thereafter appeared regularly every afternoon in a clean shirt, and face still shining from his ablutions. Nor were moral and social sanitary laws neglected. "Tommy," who was supposed to spend his whole existence in a persistent attempt to repose, must not be disturbed by noise. The

shouting and yelling which had gained the camp its infelicitous title were not permitted within hearing distance of Stumpy's. The men conversed in whispers, or smoked with Indian gravity. Profanity was tacitly given up in these sacred precincts, and throughout the camp a popular form of expletive, known as "D—n the luck!" and "Curse the luck!" was abandoned as having a new personal bearing. Vocal music was not interdicted, being supposed to have a soothing, tranquillising quality, and one song, sung by "Man-o'-War Jack," an English sailor, from Her Majesty's Australian colonies, was quite popular as a lullaby. It was a lugubrious recital of the exploits of "the *Arethusa*, Seventy-four," in a muffled minor, ending with a prolonged dying fall at the burden of each verse, "On b-o-o-o-ard of the *Arethusa*." It was a fine sight to see Jack holding The Luck, rocking from side to side as if with the motion of a ship, and crooning forth this naval ditty. Either through the peculiar rocking of Jack or the length of his song—it contained ninety stanzas and was continued with conscientious deliberation to the bitter end—the lullaby generally had the desired effect. At such times the men would lie at full length under the trees, in the soft summer twilight, smoking their pipes and drinking in the melodious utterances. An indistinct idea that this was pastoral happiness pervaded the camp. "This 'ere kind o' think," said the Cockney Simmons, meditatively reclining on his elbow, "is 'evingly." It reminded him of Greenwich.

On the long summer days The Luck was usually carried to the gulch, whence the golden store of Roaring Camp was taken. There on a blanket spread over pine-boughs, he would lie while the men were working in the ditches below. Latterly, there was a rude attempt to decorate this bower with flowers and sweet-smelling shrubs, and generally some one would bring him a cluster of wild honeysuckle, azaleas, or the painted blossoms of Las Mariposas. The men had suddenly awakened to the fact that there were beauty and significance in these trifles which they had so long trodden carelessly beneath their feet. A flake of glittering mica, a fragment of variegated quartz, a bright pebble from the bed of the creek, became beautiful to the eyes thus cleared and strengthened, and were invariably put aside for "The Luck." It was wonderful how many treasures the woods and hillsides yielded that "would do for Tommy." Surrounded by playthings such as never child out of fairyland had before, it is to be hoped that Tommy was content. He appeared to be securely happy, albeit there was an infantine gravity about him, a contemplative light in his round grey eyes that sometimes worried Stumpy. He was always tractable and quiet; and it is recorded that once, having crept beyond his "corral"—a hedge of tesselated pine-boughs which surrounded his bed—he dropped over the bank on his head in the soft earth, and remained with his mottled legs in the air in that position for at least

five minutes with unflinching gravity. He was extricated without a murmur. I hesitate to record the many other instances of his sagacity which rest, unfortunately, upon the statements of prejudiced friends. Some of them were not without a tinge of superstition.

"I crep' up the bank just now," said Kentuck one day in a breathless state of excitement, "and dern my skin if he wasn't a-talking to a jay-bird as was a-sitting on his lap. There they was just as free and sociable as anything you please, a-jawin' at each other just like two cherrybums."

Howbeit, whether creeping over the pine-boughs or lying lazily on his back blinking at the leaves above him, to him the birds sang, the squirrels chattered, and the flowers bloomed. Nature was his nurse and playfellow. For him she would let slip between the leaves golden shafts of sunlight that fell just within his grasp; she would send wandering breezes to visit him with the balm of bay and resinous gums; to him the tall redwoods nodded familiarly and sleepily, the bumble-bees buzzed, and the rooks cawed a slumberous accompaniment.

Such was the golden summer of Roaring Camp. They were "flush times"—and The Luck was with them. The claims had yielded enormously. The camp was jealous of its privileges and looked suspiciously on strangers. No encouragement was given to emigration, and, to make their seclusion more perfect, the land on either side of the mountain wall that surrounded the camp they duly pre-empted. This, and a reputation for singular proficiency with the revolver, kept the reserve of Roaring Camp inviolate. The expressman—their only connecting link with the surrounding world—sometimes told wonderful stories of the camp. He would say:

"They've a street up there in 'Roaring' that would lay over any street in Red Dog. They've got vines and flowers round their houses and they wash themselves twice a day. But they're mighty rough on strangers and they worship an Ingin baby."

With the prosperity of the camp came a desire for further improvement. It was proposed to build an hotel in the following spring, and to invite one or two decent families to reside there for the sake of "The Luck," who might perhaps profit by female companionship. The sacrifice that this concession to sex cost these men, who were fiercely sceptical in regard to its general virtue and usefulness, can only be accounted for by their affection for Tommy. A few still held out. But the resolve could not be carried into effect for three months, and the minority meekly yielded in the hope that something might turn up to prevent it. And it did.

The winter of 1851 will long be remembered in the foothills. The snow lay deep on the Sierras, and every mountain creek became a river and every river a lake. Each gorge and gulch was transformed into a tumultuous watercourse, that descended the hillsides, tearing down giant trees and scattering its drift and *débris* along the plain.

Red Dog had been twice under water and Roaring Camp had been forewarned.

"Water put the gold into them gulches," said Stumpy. "It's been here once and will be here again!" And that night the North Fork suddenly leaped over its banks and swept up the triangular valley of Roaring Camp.

In the confusion of rushing water, crushing trees, and crackling timber, and the darkness which seemed to flow with the water and blot out the fair valley but little could be done to collect the scattered camp. When the morning broke, the cabin of Stumpy nearest the river-bank was gone. Higher up the gulch they found the body of its unlucky owner; but the pride, the hope, the joy, the Luck, of Roaring Camp had disappeared. They were returning with sad hearts when a shout from the bank recalled them.

It was a relief-boat from down the river. They had picked up, they said, a man and an infant, nearly exhausted, about two miles below. Did anybody know them? and did they belong here?

It needed but a glance to show them Kentuck lying there, cruelly crushed and bruised, but still holding The Luck of Roaring Camp in his arms. As they bent over the strangely assorted pair they saw that the child was cold and pulseless. "He is dead," said one. Kentuck opened his eyes. "Dead?" he repeated feebly. "Yes, my man; and you are dying too." A smile lit the eyes of the expiring Kentuck. "Dying," he repeated; "he's a-taking me with him—tell the boys I've got The Luck with me now"; and the strong man, clinging to the frail babe as a drowning man is said to cling to a straw drifted away into the shadowy river that flows for ever to the unknown sea.

THE OUTCASTS OF POKER FLAT

FRANCIS BRET HARTE

As Mr. John Oakhurst, gambler, stepped into the main street of Poker Flat on the morning of the twenty-third of November, 1850, he was conscious of a change in its moral atmosphere since the preceding night. Two or three men, conversing earnestly together, ceased as he approached, and exchanged significant glances. There was a Sabbath lull in the air, which, in a settlement unused to Sabbath influences, looked ominous.

Mr. Oakhurst's calm, handsome face betrayed small concern in

these indications. Whether he was conscious of any predisposing cause was another question. "I reckon they're after somebody," he reflected; "likely it's me." He returned to his pocket the handkerchief with which he had been whipping away the red dust of Poker Flat from his neat boots and quietly discharged his mind of any further conjecture.

In point of fact, Poker Flat was "after somebody." It had lately suffered the loss of several thousand dollars, two valuable horses, and a prominent citizen. It was experiencing a spasm of virtuous reaction, quite as lawless and ungovernable as any of the acts that had provoked it. A secret committee had determined to rid the town of all improper persons. This was done permanently in regard to two men who were then hanging from the boughs of a sycamore in the gulch, and temporarily in the banishment of certain other objectionable characters. I regret to say that some of these were ladies. It is but due to the sex, however, to state that their impropriety was professional, and it was only in such easily established standards of evil that Poker Flat ventured to sit in judgment.

Mr. Oakhurst was right in supposing that he was included in this category. A few of the committee had urged hanging him as a possible example, and a sure method of reimbursing themselves from his pockets of the sums he had won from them. "It's agin justice," said Jim Wheeler, "to let this yer young man from Roaring Camp—an entire stranger—carry away our money." But a crude sentiment of equity residing in the breasts of those who had been fortunate enough to win from Mr. Oakhurst overruled this narrow local prejudice.

Mr. Oakhurst received his sentence with philosophic calmness, none the less cooly that he was aware of the hesitation of his judges. He was too much of a gambler not to accept Fate. With him, life was at best an uncertain game, and he recognised the usual percentage in favour of the dealer.

A body of armed men accompanied the deported wickedness of Poker Flat to the outskirts of the settlement. Besides Mr. Oakhurst, who was known to be a cooly desperate man, and for whose intimidation the armed escort was intended, the expatriated party consisted of a young woman, familiarly known as "The Duchess"; another, who had won the title of "Mother Shipton"; and "Uncle Billy," a suspected sluice-robber and confirmed drunkard. The cavalcade provoked no comments from the spectators, nor was any word uttered by the escort. Only when the gulch which marked the uttermost limit of Poker Flat was reached, the leader spoke briefly and to the point. The exiles were forbidden to return, at the peril of their lives.

As the escort disappeared, their pent-up feelings found vent in a few hysterical tears from the Duchess, some bad language from

Mother Shipton, and a Parthian volley of expletives from Uncle Billy. The philosophic Oakhurst alone remained silent. He listened calmly to Mother Shipton's desire to cut somebody's heart out, to the repeated statements of the Duchess that she would die in the road, and to the alarming oaths that seemed to be bumped out of Uncle Billy as he rode forward. With the easy good-humour characteristic of his class, he insisted upon exchanging his own riding-horse, "Five Spot," for the sorry mule which the Duchess rode. But even this act did not draw the party into any closer sympathy. The young woman readjusted her somewhat draggled plumes with a feeble, faded coquetry; Mother Shipton eyed the possessor of "Five Spot" with malevolence; and Uncle Billy included the whole party in one sweeping anathema.

The road to Sandy Bar—a camp that, not having as yet experienced the regenerating influences of Poker Flat, consequently seemed to offer some invitation to the emigrants—lay over a steep mountain range. It was distant a day's severe travel. In that advanced season, the party soon passed out of the moist, temperate regions of the foot-hills into the dry, cold, bracing air of the Sierras. The trail was narrow and difficult. At noon the Duchess, rolling out of her saddle upon the ground, declared her intention of going no farther, and the party halted.

The spot was singularly wild and impressive. A wooded amphitheatre, surrounded on three sides by precipitous cliffs of naked granite, sloped gently toward the crest of another precipice that overlooked the valley. It was, undoubtedly, the most suitable spot for a camp, had camping been advisable. But Mr. Oakhurst knew that scarcely half the journey to Sandy Bar was accomplished, and the party were not equipped or provisioned for delay. This fact he pointed out to his companions curtly, with a philosophic commentary on the folly of "throwing up their hand before the game was played out." But they were furnished with liquor, which in this emergency stood them in place of food, fuel, rest, and prescience. In spite of his remonstrances, it was not long before they were more or less under its influence. Uncle Billy passed rapidly from a bellicose state into one of stupor, the Duchess became maudlin, and Mother Shipton snored. Mr. Oakhurst alone remained erect, leaning against a rock, calmly surveying them.

Mr. Oakhurst did not drink. It interfered with a profession which required coolness, impassiveness, and presence of mind, and, in his own language, he "couldn't afford it." As he gazed at his recumbent fellow-exiles, the loneliness begotten of his pariah-trade, his habits of life, his very vices, for the first time seriously oppressed him. He bestirred himself in dusting his black clothes, washing his hands and face, and other acts characteristic of his studiously neat habits, and for a moment forgot his annoyance. The thought of deserting his weaker and more pitiable companions never perhaps occurred to

him. Yet he could not help feeling the want of that excitement which, singularly enough, was most conducive to that calm equanimity for which he was notorious. He looked at the gloomy walls that rose a thousand feet sheer above the circling pines around him ; at the sky, ominously clouded ; at the valley below, already deepening into shadow. And, doing so, suddenly he heard his own name called.

A horseman slowly ascended the trail. In the fresh, open face of the new-comer Mr. Oakhurst recognised Tom Simson, otherwise known as " The Innocent " of Sandy Bar. He had met him some months before over a " little game," and had, with perfect equanimity, won the entire fortune—amounting to some forty dollars—of that guileless youth. After the game was finished, Mr. Oakhurst drew the youthful speculator behind the door, and thus addressed him : " Tommy, you're a good little man, but you can't gamble worth a cent. Don't try it over again." He then handed him his money back, pushed him gently from the room, and so made a devoted slave of Tom Simson.

There was a remembrance of this in his boyish and enthusiastic greeting of Mr. Oakhurst. He had started, he said, to go to Poker Flat to seek his fortune. " Alone ? " No, not exactly alone ; in fact (a giggle) he had run away with Piney Woods. Didn't Mr. Oakhurst remember Piney ? She that used to wait on the table at the Temperance House ? They had been engaged a long time, but old Jake Woods had objected ; and so they had run away, and were going to Poker Flat to be married, and here they were. And they were tired out, and how lucky it was they had found a place to camp and company. All this the Innocent delivered rapidly, while Piney, a stout, comely damsel of fifteen, emerged from behind the pine-tree where she had been blushing unseen, and rode to the side of her lover.

Mr. Oakhurst seldom troubled himself with sentiment, still less with propriety ; but he had a vague idea that the situation was not fortunate. He retained, however, his presence of mind sufficiently to kick Uncle Billy, who was about to say something, and Uncle Billy was sober enough to recognise in Mr. Oakhurst's kick a superior power that would not bear trifling. He then endeavoured to dissuade Tom Simson from delaying further, but in vain. He even pointed out the fact that there was no provision, nor means of making a camp. But, unluckily, the Innocent met this objection by assuring the party that he was provided with an extra mule loaded with provisions, and by the discovery of a rude attempt at a loghouse near the trail. " Piney can stay with Mrs. Oakhurst," said the Innocent, pointing to the Duchess, " and I can shift for myself."

Nothing but Mr. Oakhurst's admonishing foot saved Uncle Billy from bursting into a roar of laughter. As it was, he felt compelled

to retire up the cañon until he could recover his gravity. There he confided the joke to the tall pine-trees, with many slaps of his leg, contortions of his face, and the usual profanity. But when he returned to the party, he found them seated by a fire—for the air had grown strangely chill and the sky overcast—in apparently amicable conversation. Piney was actually talking in an impulsive, girlish fashion to the Duchess, who was listening with an interest and animation she had not shown for many days. The Innocent was holding forth, apparently with equal effect, to Mr. Oakhurst and Mother Shipton, who was actually relaxing into amiability. "Is this yer a d——d picnic?" said Uncle Billy, with inward scorn, as he surveyed the sylvan group, the glancing firelight, and the tethered animals in the foreground. Suddenly an idea mingled with the alcoholic fumes that disturbed his brain. It was apparently of a jocular nature, for he felt impelled to slap his leg again and cram his fist into his mouth.

As the shadows crept slowly up the mountain, a slight breeze rocked the tops of the pine-trees, and moaned through their long and gloomy aisles. The ruined cabin, patched and covered with pine-boughs, was set apart for the ladies. As the lovers parted, they unaffectedly exchanged a kiss, so honest and sincere that it might have been heard above the swaying pines. The frail Duchess and the malevolent Mother Shipton were probably too stunned to remark upon this last evidence of simplicity, and so turned without a word to the hut. The fire was replenished, the men lay down before the door, and in a few minutes were asleep.

Mr. Oakhurst was a light sleeper. Toward morning he awoke, benumbed and cold. As he stirred the dying fire, the wind, which was now blowing strongly, brought to his cheek that which caused the blood to leave it—snow.

He started to his feet with the intention of awakening the sleepers, for there was no time to lose. But turning to where Uncle Billy had been lying, he found him gone. A suspicion leaped to his brain and a curse to his lips. He ran to the spot where the mules had been tethered; they were no longer there. The tracks were already rapidly disappearing in the snow.

The momentary excitement brought Mr. Oakhurst back to the fire with his usual calm. He did not waken the sleepers. The Innocent slumbered peacefully, with a smile on his good-humoured, freckled face; the virgin Piney slept beside her frailer sisters as sweetly as though attended by celestial guardians, and Mr. Oakhurst, drawing his blanket over his shoulders, stroked his moustaches and waited for the dawn. It came slowly in a whirling mist of snowflakes, that dazzled and confused the eye. What could be seen of the landscape appeared magically changed. He looked over the valley, and summed up the present and future in two words—"snowed in!"

A careful inventory of the provisions, which, fortunately for the party, had been stored within the hut, and so escaped the felonious fingers of Uncle Billy, disclosed the fact that with care and prudence they might last ten days longer. "That is," said Mr. Oakhurst, *sotto voce* to the Innocent, "if you're willing to board us. If you ain't—and perhaps you'd better not—you can wait till Uncle Billy gets back with provisions." For some occult reason, Mr. Oakhurst could not bring himself to disclose Uncle Billy's rascality, and so offered the hypothesis that he had wandered from the camp, and had accidentally stampeded the animals. He dropped a warning to the Duchess and Mother Shipton, who of course knew the facts of their associate's defection. "They'll find out the truth about us *all* when they find out anything," he added, significantly, "and there's no good frightening them now."

Tom Simson not only put all his worldly store at the disposal of Mr. Oakhurst, but seemed to enjoy the prospect of their enforced seclusion. "We'll have a good camp for a week, and then the snow'll melt, and we'll all go back together." The cheerful gaiety of the young man and Mr. Oakhurst's calm infected the others. The Innocent, with the aid of pine-boughs, extemporised a thatch for the roofless cabin, and the Duchess directed Piney in the rearrangement of the interior with a taste and tact that opened the blue eyes of that provincial maiden to their fullest extent. "I reckon now you're used to fine things at Poker Flat," said Piney. The Duchess turned away sharply to conceal something that reddened her cheek through its professional tint, and Mother Shipton requested Piney not to "chatter." But when Mr. Oakhurst returned from a weary search for the trail, he heard the sound of happy laughter echoed from the rocks. He stopped in some alarm, and his thoughts first naturally reverted to the whisky, which he had prudently *cachéd*. "And yet it don't somehow sound like whisky" said the gambler. It was not until he caught sight of the blazing fire through the still blinding storm, and the group around it, that he settled to the conviction that it was "square fun."

Whether Mr. Oakhurst had *cachéd* his cards with the whisky, as something debarred the free access of the community, I cannot say. It was certain that, in Mother Shipton's words he "didn't say cards once" during that evening. Happily, the time was beguiled by an accordion, produced somewhat ostentatiously by Tom Simson from his pack. Notwithstanding some difficulties attending the manipulation of this instrument, Piney Woods managed to pluck several reluctant melodies from its keys, to an accompaniment by the Innocent on a pair of bone castanets. But the crowning festivity of the evening was reached in a rude camp-meeting hymn, which the lovers, joining hands, sang with great earnestness and vociferation. I fear that a certain defiant tone and Covenanter's swing to its chorus, rather than any devotional quality, caused it speedily to infect the

others, who at last joined in the refrain :

> " I'm proud to live in the service of the Lord,
> And I'm bound to die in His army."

The pines rocked, the storm eddied and whirled above the miserable group, and the flames of their altar leaped heavenward, as if in token of the vow.

At midnight the storm abated, the rolling clouds parted, and the stars glittered keenly above the sleeping camp. Mr. Oakhurst, whose professional habits had enabled him to live on the smallest possible amount of sleep, in dividing the watch with Tom Simson, somehow managed to take upon himself the greater part of that duty. He excused himself to the Innocent by saying that he had " often been a week without sleep."

" Doing what ? " asked Tom.

" Poker ! " replied Oakhurst, sententiously ; " when a man gets a streak of luck—nigger-luck—he don't get tired. The luck gives in first. Luck," continued the gambler, reflectively, " is a mighty queer thing. All you know about it for certain is that it's bound to change. And it's finding out when it's going to change that makes you. We've had a streak of bad luck since we left Poker Flat—you come along, and slap you get into it, too. If you can hold your cards right along, you're all right. For," added the gambler, with cheerful irrelevance :

> " I'm proud to live in the service of the Lord,
> And I'm bound to die in His army."

The third day came, and the sun, looking through the white-curtained valley, saw the outcasts divide their slowly decreasing store of provisions for the morning meal. It was one of the peculiarities of that mountain climate that its rays diffused a kindly warmth over the wintry landscape, as if in regretful commiseration of the past. But it revealed drift on drift of snow piled high around the hut—a hopeless, unchartered, trackless sea of white lying below the rocky shores to which the castaways still clung. Through the marvellously clear air the smoke of the pastoral village of Poker Flat rose miles away. Mother Shipton saw it, and from a remote pinnacle of her rocky fastness hurled in that direction a final malediction. It was her last vituperative attempt, and perhaps for that reason was invested with a certain degree of sublimity. It did her good, she privately informed the Duchess. " Just you go out there and cuss, and see." She then set herself to the task of amusing " the child," as she and the Duchess were pleased to call Piney. Piney was no chicken, but it was a soothing and original theory of the pair thus to account for the fact that she didn't swear and wasn't improper.

When night crept up again through the gorges, the reedy notes of

the accordion rose and fell in fitful spasms and long-drawn gasps by the flickering camp-fire. But music failed to fill entirely the aching void left by insufficient food, and a new diversion was proposed by Piney—story-telling. Neither Mr. Oakhurst nor his female companions caring to relate their personal experiences, this plan would have failed too, but for the Innocent. Some months before he had chanced upon a stray copy of Mr. Pope's ingenious translation of the *Iliad*. He now proposed to narrate the principal incidents of that poem—having thoroughly mastered the argument and fairly forgotten the words—in the current vernacular of Sandy Bar. And so for the rest of that night the Homeric demi-gods again walked the earth. Trojan bully and wily Greek wrestled in the winds, and the great pines in the cañon seemed to bow to the wrath of the son of Peleus. Mr. Oakhurst listened with quiet satisfaction. Most especially was he interested in the fate of "Ash-heels," as the Innocent persisted in denominating the "swift-footed Achilles."

So with small food and much of Homer and the accordion, a week passed over the heads of the outcasts. The sun again forsook them, and again from leaden skies the snowflakes were sifted over the land. Day by day closer around them drew the snowy circle, until at last they looked from their prison over drifted walls of dazzling white that towered twenty feet above their heads. It became more and more difficult to replenish their fires, even from the fallen trees beside them, now half hidden in the drifts. And yet no one complained. The lovers turned from the dreary prospect, and looked into each other's eyes, and were happy. Mr. Oakhurst settled himself coolly to the losing game before him. The Duchess, more cheerful than she had been, assumed the care of Piney. Only Mother Shipton—once the strongest of the party—seemed to sicken and fade. At midnight on the tenth day she called Oakhurst to her side.

"I'm going," she said, in a voice of querulous weakness, "but don't say anything about it. Don't waken the kids. Take the bundle from under my head and open it."

Mr. Oakhurst did so. It contained Mother Shipton's rations for the last week, untouched.

"Give 'em to the child," she said, pointing to the sleeping Piney.

"You've starved yourself," said the gambler.

"That's what they call it," said the woman, querulously, as she lay down again, and, turning her face to the wall, passed quietly away.

The accordion and the bones were put aside that day, and Homer was forgotten. When the body of Mother Shipton had been committed to the snow, Mr. Oakhurst took the Innocent aside, and showed him a pair of snow-shoes, which he had fashioned from the old pack-saddle.

"There's one chance in a hundred to save her yet," he said, pointing to Piney; "but it's there," he added, pointing toward Poker Flat. "If you can reach there in two days, she's safe."

"And you?" asked Tom Simson.

"I'll stay here," was the curt reply.

The lovers parted with a long embrace.

"You are not going too?" said the Duchess, as she saw Mr. Oakhurst apparently waiting to accompany him.

"As far as the cañon," he replied. He turned suddenly, and kissed the Duchess, leaving her pallid face aflame, and her trembling limbs rigid with amazement.

Night came, but not Mr. Oakhurst. It brought the storm again and the whirling snow. Then the Duchess, feeding the fire, found that some one had quietly piled beside the hut enough fuel to last a few days longer. The tears rose to her eyes, but she hid them from Piney.

The women slept but little. In the morning, looking into each other's faces, they read their fate. Neither spoke; but Piney, accepting the position of the stronger, drew near and placed her arm around the Duchess's waist. They kept this attitude for the rest of the day. That night the storm reached its greatest fury, and, rending asunder the protecting pines, invaded the very hut.

Toward morning they found themselves unable to feed the fire, which gradually died away. As the embers slowly blackened, the Duchess crept closer to Piney, and broke the silence of many hours: "Piney, can you pray?"

"No, dear," said Piney, simply.

The Duchess, without knowing exactly why, felt relieved, and, putting her head upon Piney's shoulder, spoke no more. And so reclining, the younger and purer pillowing the head of her soiled sister upon her virgin breast, they fell asleep.

The wind lulled as if it feared to waken them. Feathery drifts of snow, shaken from the long pine-boughs, flew like white-winged birds, and settled about them as they slept. The moon through the rifted clouds looked down upon what had been the camp. But all human stain, all trace of earthly travail, was hidden beneath the spotless mantle mercifully flung from above.

They slept all that day and the next, nor did they waken when voices and footsteps broke the silence of the camp. And when pitying fingers brushed the snow from their wan faces, you could scarcely have told, from the equal peace that dwelt upon them, which was she that had sinned. Even the law of Poker Flat recognised this, and turned away, leaving them still locked in each other's arms.

But at the head of the gulch, on one of the largest pine-trees, they

found the deuce of clubs pinned to the bark with a bowie-knife. It bore the following, written in pencil, in a firm hand:

†
BENEATH THIS TREE
LIES THE BODY
OF
JOHN OAKHURST
WHO STRUCK A STREAK OF BAD LUCK
ON THE 23RD OF NOVEMBER, 1850,
AND
HANDED IN HIS CHECKS
ON THE 7TH DECEMBER, 1850.
†

And pulseless and cold, with a derringer by his side and a bullet in his heart, though still calm as in life, beneath the snow lay he who was at once the strongest and yet the weakest of the outcasts of Poker Flat.

THE IDYL OF RED GULCH

FRANCIS BRET HARTE

SANDY was very drunk. He was lying under an azalea-bush, in pretty much the same attitude in which he had fallen some hours before. How long he had been lying there he could not tell, and didn't care; how long he should lie there was a matter equally indefinite and unconsidered. A tranquil philosophy, born of his physical condition, suffused and saturated his moral being.

The spectacle of a drunken man, and of this drunken man in particular, was not, I grieve to say, of sufficient novelty in Red Gulch to attract attention. Earlier in the day some local satirist had erected a temporary tombstone at Sandy's head, bearing the inscription, "Effects of McCorkle's whisky—kills at forty rods," with a hand pointing to McCorkle's saloon. But this, I imagine, was, like most local satire, personal; and was a reflection upon the unfairness of the process rather than a commentary upon the impropriety of the result. With this facetious exception, Sandy had been undisturbed. A wandering mule, released from his pack, had cropped the scant herbage beside him, and sniffed curiously at the prostrate man; a vagabond dog, with that deep sympathy that the species have for drunken men, had licked his dusty boots and curled

himself up at his feet, and lay there, blinking one eye in the sunlight, with a simulation of dissipation that was ingenious and dog-like in its implied flattery of the unconscious man beside him.

Meanwhile the shadows of the pine-trees had slowly swung around until they crossed the road, and their trunks barred the open meadow with gigantic parallels of black and yellow. Little puffs of red dust, lifted by the plunging hoofs of passing teams, dispersed in a grimy shower upon the recumbent man. The sun sank lower and lower, and still Sandy stirred not. And then the repose of this philosopher was disturbed, as other philosophers have been, by the intrusion of an unphilosophical sex.

"Miss Mary," as she was known to the little flock that she had just dismissed from the log schoolhouse beyond the pines, was taking her afternoon walk. Observing an unusually fine cluster of blossoms on the azalea-bush opposite, she crossed the road to pluck it, picking her way through the red dust, not without certain fierce little shivers of disgust and some feline circumlocution. And then she came suddenly upon Sandy!

Of course she uttered the little staccato cry of her sex. But when she had paid that tribute to her physical weakness she became overbold and halted for a moment—at least six feet from this prostrate monster—with her white skirts gathered in her hand, ready for flight. But neither sound nor motion came from the bush. With one little foot she then overturned the satirical headboard, and muttered "Beasts!"—an epithet which probably, at that moment, conveniently classified in her mind the entire male population of Red Gulch. For Miss Mary, being possessed of certain rigid notions of her own, had not, perhaps, properly appreciated the demonstrative gallantry for which the Californian has been so justly celebrated by his brother Californians, and had, as a new-comer, perhaps fairly earned the reputation of being "stuck-up."

As she stood there she noticed, also, that the slant sunbeams were heating Sandy's head to what she judged to be an unhealthy temperature, and that his hat was lying uselessly at his side. To pick it up and to place it over his face was a work requiring some courage, particularly as his eyes were open. Yet she did it and made good her retreat. But she was somewhat concerned, on looking back, to see that the hat was removed, and that Sandy was sitting up and saying something.

The truth was, that in the calm depths of Sandy's mind he was satisfied that the rays of the sun were beneficial and healthful; that from childhood he had objected to lying down in a hat; that no people but condemned fools, past redemption, ever wore hats; and that his right to dispense with them when he pleased was inalienable. This was the statement of his inner consciousness. Unfortunately, its outward expression was vague, being limited to a repetition of

the following formula : " Su'shine all ri' ! Wasser maär, eh ? Wass up, su'shine ? "

Miss Mary stopped, and, taking fresh courage from her vantage of distance, asked him if there was anything that he wanted.

" Wass up ? Wasser maär ? " continued Sandy, in a very high key.

" Get up, you horrid man ! " said Miss Mary, now thoroughly incensed ; " get up and go home."

Sandy staggered to his feet. He was six feet high, and Miss Mary trembled. He started forward a few paces and then stopped.

" Wass I go home for ? " he suddenly asked, with great gravity.

" Go and take a bath," replied Miss Mary, eyeing his grimy person with great disfavour.

To her infinite dismay, Sandy suddenly pulled off his coat and vest, threw them on the ground, kicked off his boots, and, plunging wildly forward, darted headlong over the hill in the direction of the river.

" Goodness heavens ! the man will be drowned ! " said Miss Mary ; and then, with feminine inconsistency, she ran back to the schoolhouse and locked herself in.

That night, while seated at supper with her hostess, the blacksmith's wife, it came to Miss Mary to ask, demurely, if her husband ever got drunk. " Abner," responded Mrs. Stidger reflectively— " let's see ! Abner hasn't been tight since last 'lection." Miss Mary would have liked to ask if he preferred lying in the sun on these occasions, and if a cold bath would have hurt him ; but this would have involved an explanation, which she did not then care to give. So she contented herself with opening her grey eyes widely at the red-cheeked Mrs. Stidger—a fine specimen of South-western efflorescence—and then dismissed the subject altogether. The next day she wrote to her dearest friend in Boston : " I think I find the intoxicated portion of this community the least objectionable. I refer, my dear, to the men, of course. I do not know anything that could make the women tolerable."

In less than a week Miss Mary had forgotten this episode, except that her afternoon walks took thereafter, almost unconsciously, another direction. She noticed, however, that every morning a fresh cluster of azalea blossoms appeared among the flowers on her desk. This was not strange, as her little flock were aware of her fondness for flowers, and invariably kept her desk bright with anemones, syringas, and lupines ; but, on questioning them, they one and all professed ignorance of the azaleas. A few days later, Master Johnny Stidger, whose desk was nearest to the window, was suddenly taken with spasms of apparently gratuitous laughter, that threatened the discipline of the school. All that Miss Mary could get from him was, that some one had been " looking in the winder." Irate and indignant, she sallied from her hive to do battle with the intruder. As she

turned the corner of the schoolhouse she came plump upon the quondam drunkard, now perfectly sober, and inexpressibly sheepish and guilty-looking.

These facts Miss Mary was not slow to take a feminine advantage of, in her present humour. But it was somewhat confusing to observe, also, that the beast, despite some faint signs of past dissipation, was amiable-looking—in fact, a kind of blond Samson, whose corn-coloured silken beard apparently had never yet known the touch of barber's razor or Delilah's shears. So that the cutting speech which quivered on her ready tongue died upon her lips, and she contented herself with receiving his stammering apology with supercilious eyelids and the gathered skirts of uncontamination. When she re-entered the schoolroom, her eyes fell upon the azaleas with a new sense of revelation ; and then she laughed, and the little people all laughed, and they were all unconsciously very happy.

It was a hot day, and not long after this, that two short-legged boys came to grief on the threshold of the school with a pail of water, which they had laboriously brought from the spring, and that Miss Mary compassionately seized the pail and started for the spring herself. At the foot of the hill a shadow crossed her path, and a blue-shirted arm dexterously but gently relieved her of her burden. Miss Mary was both embarrassed and angry. " If you carried more of that for yourself," she said spitefully to the blue arm, without deigning to raise her lashes to its owner, " you'd do better." In the submissive silence that followed she regretted the speech, and thanked him so sweetly at the door that he stumbled. Which caused the children to laugh again—a laugh in which Miss Mary joined, until the colour came faintly into her pale cheek. The next day a barrel was mysteriously placed beside the door, and as mysteriously filled with fresh spring-water every morning.

Nor was this superior young person without other quiet attentions. " Profane Bill," driver of the Slumgullion Stage, widely known in the newspapers for his " gallantry " in invariably offering the box-seat to the fair sex, had excepted Miss Mary from this attention, on the ground that he had a habit of " cussin' on up grades," and gave her half the coach to herself. Jack Hamlin, a gambler, having once silently ridden with her in the same coach, afterward threw a decanter at the head of a confederate for mentioning her name in a bar-room. The over-dressed mother of a pupil whose paternity was doubtful had often lingered near this astute Vestal's temple, never daring to enter its sacred precincts, but content to worship the priestess from afar.

With such unconscious intervals the monotonous procession of blue skies, glittering sunshine, brief twilights, and starlit nights passed over Red Gulch. Miss Mary grew fond of walking in the sedate and proper woods. Perhaps she believed, with Mrs. Stidger, that the balsamic odours of the firs " did her chest good," for

certainly her slight cough was less frequent and her step was firmer; perhaps she had learned the unending lesson which the patient pines are never weary of repeating to heedful or listless ears. And so one day she planned a picnic on Buckeye Hill, and took the children with her. Away from the dusty road, the straggling shanties, the yellow ditches, the clamour of restless engines, the cheap finery of show-windows, the deeper glitter of paint and coloured glass, and the thin veneering which barbarism takes upon itself in such localities, what infinite relief was theirs! The last heap of ragged rock and clay passed, the last unsightly chasm crossed—how the waiting woods opened their long files to receive them! How the children—perhaps because they had not yet grown quite away from the breast of the bounteous Mother—threw themselves face downward on her brown bosom with uncouth caresses, filling the air with their laughter; and how Miss Mary herself—felinely fastidious and intrenched as she was in the purity of spotless skirts, collar, and cuffs—forgot all, and ran like a crested quail at the head of her brood, until, romping, laughing, and panting, with a loosened braid of brown hair, a hat hanging by a knotted ribbon from her throat, she came suddenly and violently, in the heart of the forest, upon the luckless Sandy!

The explanations, apologies, and not overwise conversation that ensued need not be indicated here. It would seem, however, that Miss Mary had already established some acquaintance with this ex-drunkard. Enough that he was soon accepted as one of the party; that the children, with that quick intelligence which Providence gives the helpless, recognised a friend, and played with his blond beard and long silken moustache, and took other liberties—as the helpless are apt to do. And when he had built a fire against a tree, and had shown them other mysteries of woodcraft, their admiration knew no bounds. At the close of two such foolish, idle, happy hours he found himself lying at the feet of the schoolmistress, gazing dreamily in her face as she sat upon the sloping hillside weaving wreaths of laurel and syringa, in very much the same attitude as he had lain when first they met. Nor was the similitude greatly forced. The weakness of an easy, sensuous nature, that had found a dreamy exaltation in liquor, it is to be feared was now finding an equal intoxication in love.

I think that Sandy was dimly conscious of this himself. I know that he longed to be doing something—slaying a grizzly, scalping a savage, or sacrificing himself in some way for the sake of this sallow-faced, grey-eyed schoolmistress. As I should like to present him in an heroic attitude, I stay my hand with great difficulty at this moment, being only withheld from introducing such an episode by a strong conviction that it does not usually occur at such times. And I trust that my fairest reader, who remembers that, in a real crisis, it is always some uninteresting stranger or unromantic

policeman, and not Adolphus, who rescues, will forgive the omission.

So they sat there undisturbed—the woodpeckers chattering overhead and the voices of the children coming pleasantly from the hollow below. What they said matters little. What they thought—which might have been interesting—did not transpire. The woodpeckers only learned how Miss Mary was an orphan; how she left her uncle's house to come to California for the sake of health and independence; how Sandy was an orphan too; how he came to California for excitement; how he had lived a wild life, and how he was trying to reform; and other details, which, from a woodpecker's viewpoint, undoubtedly must have seemed stupid and a waste of time. But even in such trifles was the afternoon spent; and when the children were again gathered, and Sandy, with a delicacy which the schoolmistress well understood, took leave of them quietly at the outskirts of the settlement, it had seemed the shortest day of her weary life.

As the long, dry summer withered to its roots, the school term of Red Gulch—to use a local euphuism—"dried up" also. In another day Miss Mary would be free, and for a season, at least, Red Gulch would know her no more. She was seated alone in the schoolhouse, her cheek resting on her hand, her eyes half closed in one of those day-dreams in which Miss Mary, I fear, to the danger of school discipline, was lately in the habit of indulging. Her lap was full of mosses, ferns, and other woodland memories. She was so preoccupied with these and her own thoughts that a gentle tapping at the door passed unheard, or translated itself into the remembrance of far-off woodpeckers. When at last it asserted itself more distinctly, she started up with a flushed cheek and opened the door. On the threshold stood a woman, the self-assertion and audacity of whose dress were in singular contrast to her timid, irresolute bearing.

Miss Mary recognised at a glance the dubious mother of her anonymous pupil. Perhaps she was disappointed, perhaps she was only fastidious; but as she coldly invited her to enter, she half unconsciously settled her white cuffs and collar, and gathered closer her own chaste skirts. It was, perhaps, for this reason that the embarrassed stranger, after a moment's hesitation, left her gorgeous parasol open and sticking in the dust beside the door, and then sat down at the further end of a long bench. Her voice was husky as she began:

"I heerd tell that you were goin' down to the Bay to-morrow, and I couldn't let you go until I came to thank you for your kindness to my Tommy."

"Tommy," Miss Mary said, "was a good boy, and deserved more than the poor attention she could give him."

"Thank you, miss; thank ye!" cried the stranger, brightening even through the colour which Red Gulch knew facetiously as her "war paint," and striving, in her embarrassment, to drag the long

bench nearer the schoolmistress. " I thank you, miss, for that ; and if I am his mother, there ain't a sweeter, dearer, better boy lives than him. And if I ain't much as says it, thar ain't a sweeter, dearer, angeler teacher lives than he's got."

Miss Mary, sitting primly behind her desk, with a ruler over her shoulder, opened her grey eyes widely at this, but said nothing.

" It ain't for you to be complimented by the like of me, I know," she went on hurriedly. " It ain't for me to be comin' here, in broad day, to do it, either ; but I come to ask a favour—not for me, miss—not for me, but for the darling boy."

Encouraged by a look in the young schoolmistress's eye, and putting her lilac-gloved hands together, the fingers downward, between her knees, she went on, in a low voice :

" You see, miss, there's no one the boy has any claim on but me, and I ain't the proper person to bring him up. I thought some, last year, of sending him away to 'Frisco to school, but when they talked of bringing a schoolma'am here, I waited till I saw you, and then I knew it was all right, and I could keep my boy a little longer. And, oh ! miss, he loves you so much ; and if you could hear him talk about you in his pretty way, and if he could ask you what I ask you now, you couldn't refuse him.

" It is natural," she went on rapidly, in a voice that trembled strangely between pride and humility—" it's natural that he should take to you miss, for his father, when I first knew him, was a gentleman—and the boy must forget me, sooner or later—and so I ain't a-goin' to cry about that. For I come to ask you to take my Tommy—God bless him for the bestest, sweetest boy that lives—to—to—take him with you."

She had risen and caught the young girl's hand in her own, and had fallen on her knees beside her.

" I've money plenty, and it's all yours and his. Put him in some good school, where you can go and see him, and help him to—to—to forget his mother. Do with him what you like. The worst you can do will be kindness to what he will learn with me. Only take him out of this wicked life, this cruel place, this home of shame and sorrow. You will ! I know you will—won't you ? You will—you must not, you cannot say no ! You will make him as pure, as gentle as yourself ; and when he has grown up, you will tell him his father's name—the name that hasn't passed my lips for years—the name of Alexander Morton, whom they call here Sandy ! Miss Mary !—do not take your hand away ! Miss Mary speak to me ! You will take my boy ? Do not put your face from me. I know it ought not to look on such as me. Miss Mary !—my God, be merciful !—she is leaving me ! "

Miss Mary had risen, and in the gathering twilight had felt her way to the open window. She stood there, leaning against the casement, her eyes fixed on the last rosy tints that were fading from

the western sky. There was still some of its light on her pure young forehead, on her white collar, on her clasped white hands, but all fading slowly away. The suppliant had dragged herself, still on her knees, beside her.

"I know it takes time to consider. I will wait here all night; but I cannot go until you speak. Do not deny me now. You will!—I see it in your sweet face—such a face as I have seen in my dreams. I see it in your eyes, Miss Mary!—you will take my boy!"

The last red beam crept higher, suffused Miss Mary's eyes with something of its glory, flickered, and faded, and went out. The sun had set on Red Gulch. In the twilight and silence Miss Mary's voice sounded pleasantly.

"I will take the boy. Send him to me to-night."

The happy mother raised the hem of Miss Mary's skirts to her lips. She would have buried her hot face in its virgin folds, but she dared not. She rose to her feet.

"Does—this man—know of your intention?" asked Miss Mary suddenly.

"No, nor cares. He has never seen the child to know it."

"Go to him at once—to-night—now? Tell him what you have done. Tell him I have taken his child, and tell him—he must never see—see—the child again. Wherever it may be, he must not come; wherever I may take it, he must not follow! There, go now, please—I'm weary, and—have much yet to do!"

They walked together to the door. On the threshold the woman turned.

"Good-night!"

She would have fallen at Miss Mary's feet. But at the same moment the young girl reached out her arms, caught the sinful woman to her own pure breast for one brief moment, and then closed and locked the door.

It was with a sudden sense of great responsibility that Profane Bill took the reins of the Slumgullion stage the next morning, for the schoolmistress was one of his passengers. As he entered the high road, in obedience to a pleasant voice from the "inside," he suddenly reined up his horses and respectfully waited, as Tommy hopped out at the command of Miss Mary.

"Not that bush, Tommy—the next."

Tommy whipped out his new pocket-knife, and cutting a branch from a tall azalea-bush, returned with it to Miss Mary.

"All right now?"

"All right!"

And the stage-door closed on the Idyl of Red Gulch.

GEORGE BROOKE

circa 1840

HOW ANGELS GOT RELIGION

" NEVER heard how we got religion to Angels, stranger ? I thought, uv course, everybody'd heerd that yarn. Tell ye ? Why sure ; but let's licker again and I'll reminisce.

" Yer see, 'twas afore Angels got to be sech a big camp as 'twas later on, but it was a rich camp and a mighty wicked one. There were lots uv chaps there who'd jest as soon die in their boots as eat ; and every other house was a dance-house or a saloon or a gambling-hell. Pretty Pete and his pardner, Five-Ace Bob, was reckoned the wickedest men in the State ; and Old Bill Jones, what kept the Golden West Hotel, had a national reputation for cussin'. The idea of a parson striking the camp never was thought uv ; but one day I was playing bank into Pete's game when Five-Ace came a runnin' in 'n' sez :

" ' Boys, I'll be derned, but there's an ornery cuss of a parson jest rid up to Jones's. He's got a partner with him, and he 'lows he's goin' to convert the camp.'

" ' The hell he is ! ' sez Pete. ' I'll finish the deal and go down and see about that ! '

" So we all walked down to Jones's, and thar, sure 'nuff, in the bar, talking with Old Bill, wuz the parson, black coat and white tie 'n' all. He was a big, squar'-shouldered chap with a black beard, and keen grey eyes that looked right through yer. His pardner was only a boy of twenty or so, with yeller, curly ha'r, pink-and-white gal's face, and big blue eyes. We all walked in, 'n' Pete he stands to the bar 'n' shouts fer all hands ter drink ; 'n' to our surprise the parson 'n' the kid both stepped up and called fer red licker 'n' drank it. After the drink was finished, the parson sez :

" ' Gents, as yer see, I'm a minister of the Gospel, but I see no harm in any man drinking, ez long ez he ain't no drunkard. I drank just now because I want yer to see that I am not ashamed to do before yer face what I'd do behind yer back.'

" ' Right yer are, parson,' sez Pete ; ' put it thar ' ; 'n' they shook hands, 'n' then Pete he up and called off the hull gang—

Five-Ace 'n' Lucky Barnes 'n' Dirty Smith, 'n' one 'n' all the rest ub 'em.

" The parson shook hands with all uv us, and sed he was going to have a meetin' in Shifty Sal's dance-house that night, ez 'twas the biggest room in camp, 'n' ast us all to come, 'n' we sed we would. When we got outside, Pete sez : ' Boys, you mind me, that devil-dodger'll capture the camp ' ; 'n' he did. That night we all went along to Shifty's, and found the parson and the kid on the platform where the fiddlers used to sit ; and every man in camp wuz in the audience. The parson spoke first :

" ' Gents, I want to tell yer first off I don't want any uv yer dust. I've got enough fer myself and my young friend, 'n' there won't be no rake-off in this yer meetin'-house, 'n' I'm not here to preach against any man's way o' makin' a livin'. I will preach ag'in drunkenness, and I shall speak privately with the gamblers ; but I want to keep you men in mind uv yer homes 'n' yer mothers 'n' yer wives 'n' yer sweethearts, and get yer to lead cleaner lives, so's when yer meet 'em ag'in yer'll not hev to be 'shamed.'

" And then he sed we'd hev a song, 'n' the youngster he started in 'n' played a concertina and sang ' Yes, we'll gather at the River ' ; 'n' there wuzn't one uv us that it didn't remind uv how our mothers used to dress us up Sundays 'n' send us to Sunday school, and stand at the door to watch us down street, and call us back to ast if we were sure we had our clean pocket handkerchur ; 'n' I tell yer, mister, thar wuzn't a man with dry eyes in the crowd when he'd finished. That young feller had a v'ice like a angel. Pete he sed it wuz a tenner v'ice, but Five-Ace offered to bet him a hundred to fifty it wuz more like a fifteener or a twenty. Pete told Five-Ace he wuz a derned old fool 'n' didn't know what he wuz talkin' about.

" Well, things run along for about a week, 'n' one day Pete come to me and sez :

" ' Look here, Ralters, this yere camp ain't no jay camp, 'n' we've got to hev a church fer the parson. He's a jim-dandy, and won't ask for nothing. He'd jest natchelly go on prayin' and preachin', 'n' tryin' ter save a couple uv old whisky-soaked souls like yourn and Bill Jones's, which ain't wuth powder to blow 'em to hell, 'n' you'd let him go on doin' it in that old shack of Sal's 'n' never make a move. Now, I'm goin' to rustle round 'n' dig up dust enough from the boys, and we'll jest build him a meetin'-house as'll be a credit to the camp ' ; 'n' in a few days the boys hed a good log meetin'-house, built, floored, 'n' benches in it, 'n' everythin'.

" The parson was tickled 'most to death. Next they built him a house, 'n' he 'n' his pardner moved into it. Then Pete said the gals must go ; sed it wuz a dead, rank, snide game to work on the parson ter hev to go down street 'n' be guyed by them hussies ('n' they did guy him awful sometimes, too) ; so the gals they went. Then Pete sed the church had to be properly organised ; hed to

hev deacons 'n' churchwardens 'n' sextons 'n' things ; so Old Bill Jones 'n' Alabam 'n' me wuz made deacons, 'n' Pete 'n' Five-Ace was churchwardens.

" In a month every last man in camp wuz worryin' 'bout his future state. Old Bill Jones came into meetin' one night with his face 'n' hands washed 'n' an old black suit on, 'n' sot down on the anxious bench and ast to be prayed fer. The parson knelt down 'n' put his arm round him,'n' how he did pray ! Before he got through, Lucky Barnes, Alabam, 'n' me wuz on the bench too, 'n' Pete shoved his Chinaman up the aisle by the collar 'n' sot him down 'longside o' me. Pete sed he was high-toned Christian gentleman himself, hed been born 'n' raised a Christian, 'n' wuz a senior churchwarden to boot, and that he'd make a Christian of Ah Foo or spoil a Chinaman.

" That parson prayed most powerful that night. As a offhand, rough 'n' tumble, free 'n' easy prayer, I never see his beat ; he hed the whole aujience in tears, 'n' you might hev heard Pete's amens 'n' glory-halleluyers off to Buller's Flat. Old Jones wuz a rolling around on the floor 'n' hollering fer to be saved from the devil before the parson were half finished, 'n' he made so much noise that Pete hed to fire a bucket uv water over him to quiet him down. That meetin' wuz so plum full uv the spirit (ez the parson called it) that it never broke up till twelve o'clock, ez Jones's shift to deal faro begun at twelve.

" There wuz over twenty perfesses that night, not countin' Pete's Chinaman, 'n' next Sunday we hed a big baptism in the crick, 'n' forty uv us wuz put through. Pete sed he reckoned Ah Foo hed better be put through every day for a week or so, sence he'd always bin a dodgasted heathen, but the parson 'lowed wunst wuz enuff ; but he giv' him an extra dip jest fer luck, 'n' I never see a more ornery-lookin' cuss in my life than that Chinese were when he came out.

" The Chinese laundrymen were ast to jine the church, but they wouldn't savey, 'n' so Pete 'n' Five-Ace, Old Bill 'n' me 'n' Alabam we waited on 'em 'n' told 'em to git, 'n' took 'em down to the crick 'n' baptized 'em jest fer luck. Pete sed if they stayed Ah Foo 'ud git to backslidin' fust thing he knowed, 'n' then where'd *his* reputation be ?

" Waal, stranger, things run along nice 'n' smooth fer a couple uv months er so till Chris'mus come nigh. The boys hed been a keepin' mighty straight ; there wuzn't a man in camp that drinked more'n wuz hullsome fer him ; there hedn't bin a shootin' scrape fer weeks. Pete sed things wuz gittin' so all-fired ca'm 'n' peaceful that he wouldn't be at all surprised to git up some fine day 'n' find Ah Foo with wings, 'n' feathers on his legs like a Bramah hen. Nary a man packed a gun, 'n' when a gent 'ud forgit 'n' drop a cuss word he'd beg parding. The parson wuz thick with all the boys. He writ letters for us, advised us about all out biznus, 'n' knew all about

everybody's affairs. Lots uv 'em gave him their dust-sack to keep fer 'em, 'n' he knowed where every man hed his cached.

" Along jest afore Chris'mus cum Pete called a meetin' uv the deacons 'n' churchwardens down to his place, 'n' after the sexton (Ah Foo) hed brought in a round of drinks, he sed :

" ' Gents, ez chairman *ex-officer* in this yer layout, I move that we give the parson a little present fer Chris'mus. Yer know he won't take a dern cent from us, 'n' never has. Uv course, he has taken a few thousand from time to time to send to orfings 'n' things uv that kind, but not a red fer hisself or pard ; 'n' I move that we make him a little present on Chris'mus Day, 'n' it needn't be so derned little, either. Gents in favour'll say so, and gents wot ain't kin keep mum. Carried, 'n' that settles it. Five-Ace 'n' me'll take in contributions, 'n' we won't take any less than fifty cases.'

" That wuz two days afore Chris'mus Day, 'n' when it cum Pete 'n' Five-Ace hed about five thousand in dust 'n' nuggets fer the parson's present. Pete assessed Ah Foo a month's pay, 'n' he kicked hard, but twer'n't no use.

" The day wuz bright 'n' clear, 'n' at 'leven o'clock every man in camp wuz at church. The little buildin' looked mighty tasty—all fixed off with pine-tassels 'n' red berries we'd got in the woods, 'n' every man wuz dressed out in his best duds. At 'leven exact the parson 'n' the kid, who hed bin standin' at the door shakin' hands 'n' wishin' everybody what cum in Merry Chris'mus, cum in 'n' took their seats on the platform. Pete 'n' Five-Ace 'n' Bill Jones 'n' Alabam 'n' me sot on a bench jest in front o' the platform. We wuz all togged out in our best fixin's, 'n' Pete 'n' Five-Ace they sported dimon's till yer couldn't rest. Waal, ez usual, the perceedin's opened up with er prayer from the parson ; 'n' then we hed singin' 'n' it seemed ter me ez if I never hed heerd sich singin' in my life afore ez thet kid let out o' him thet day.

" Then the parson he started in ter jaw, 'n' I must ellow he giv' us a great discourse. I never see him so long-winded afore tho', 'n' Pete was beginnin' to get mighty restless 'n' oneasy, when all uv a suddint we heerd the door open 'n' shet quick 'n' sharp, 'n' every one turned round to find a great, big, black-bearded cuss at the door a coverin' the hull gang uv us with a double-bar'led shotgun, 'n' jest a standin' thar cool 'n' silent.

" ' Face round here, ye derned fools ! " yelled somebody in a sharp, quick, biznus-meanin' v'ice, 'n' all hands faced round to find the parson holding 'em up with another shotgun—own brother to the one the other cuss hed. ' I don't want a word out er yer,' he sed. ' Yer see my game now, don't yer ? Thar ain't a gun in the house 'cept the ones you see, 'n' if any gent makes any row in this yer meetin' I'll fill his hide so plum full o' holes 'twon't hold his bones. The kid will now take up the collection, 'n' ez it's the first one we ever hev taken up, yer must make it a liber'l one, see ? '

" The kid started out with a gunny-sack, 'n' went through the very last man in the crowd. He took everything, even to the rings on our fingers. The parson hed the drop, 'n' we knew it 'n' never kicked, but jest giv' up our stuff like lambs.

" After the kid hed finished he took the sack outside, 'n' thet's the last we ever seed o' him. Then the parson he sez :

" ' Now, gents, I must say adoo, ez I must be a travellin', for I hev another meetin' to attend this eve. I want to say, tho', afore I go, thet you're the orneriest gang uv derned fools I ever played fer suckers. A few friends uv mine hev taken the liberty, while yer've been to meetin' this blessed Chris'mus Day, uv goin' through yer cabins 'n' diggin' up yer little caches uv dust 'n' uther val'ables. Yer stock hez all been stampeded, 'n' yer guns yer'll find somewhar at the bottom of the crick. My friend at the door will hold yer level while I walk out, 'n' we will then keep yer quiet fer a few minutes longer through ther winder jest so's we can git a nice, cumf'table start ' ; 'n' so they did. What c'u'd we do ? The parson walked out, grinning all over himself, 'n' he 'n' his pals they nailed up the door 'n' winders (thar wuz only two), 'n' very soon after they had finished we heerd the clatter o' huffs 'n' knowed they wuz gone.

" I must draw a veil over the rest uv thet day's purceedin's, stranger. The langwidge used by ther boys wuz too awful to repeat ; but t'was jest ez this parson sed, when we got out o' thet meetin'-house we found every animal on the location gone, 'n' the only arms left wuz knives 'n' clubs ; yet we'd hev gone after 'em with nothin' but our hands, but we couldn't follow afoot.

" How much did they get ? I don't rightly know, but not fur frum fifty thousand. The hull camp wuz stone-brook, all excep' Ah Foo, 'n' he wuz the only one uv us as hed sense enuff not to tell thet durned parson whar he cached his stuff. Pete 'n' Five-Ace wuz so everlastin' hurt at the hull biznus that they shut up the Bird o' Prey, borrowed Ah Foo's sack, 'n' left for the Bay to try 'n' find thet parson ; but they never did find him, 'n' no one ever heard uv him again."

W. H. H. MURRAY

1840–1904

A RIDE WITH A MAD HORSE IN A FREIGHT CAR

It was at the battle of Malvern Hill—a battle where the carnage was more frightful, as it seems to me, than in any this side of the Alleghanies during the whole war—that my story must begin. I was then serving as Major in the —th Massachusetts Regiment—the old —th, as we used to call it—and a bloody time the boys had of it too. About 2 P.M. we had been sent out to skirmish along the edge of the wood in which, as our generals suspected, the Rebs lay massing for a charge across the slope, upon the crest of which our army was posted. We had barely entered the underbrush when we met the heavy formations of Magruder in the very act of charging. Of course, our thin line of skirmishers was no impediment to those on-rushing masses. They were on us and over us before we could get out of the way. I do not think that half of those running, screaming masses of men ever knew that they had passed over the remnants of as plucky a regiment as ever came out of the old Bay State. But many of the boys had good reason to remember that afternoon at the base of Malvern Hill, and I among the number; for when the last line of Rebs had passed over me, I was left among the bushes with the breath nearly trampled out of me and an ugly bayonet-gash through my thigh; and mighty little consolation was it for me at that moment to see the fellow who ran me through lying stark dead at my side, with a bullet-hole in his head, his shock of coarse black hair matted with blood, and his stony eyes looking into mine. Well, I bandaged up my limb the best I might, and started to crawl away, for our batteries had opened, and the grape and canister that came hurtling down the slope passed but a few feet over my head. It was slow and painful work, as you can imagine, but at last, by dint of perseverance, I had dragged myself away to the left of the direct range of the batteries, and, creeping to the verge of the wood, looked off over the green slope. I understood by the crash and roar of the guns, the yells and cheers of the men, and that hoarse murmur which those who have been in battle know, but which I cannot describe in words, that there was hot work going on

out there; but never have I seen, no, not in that three days' desperate *mêlée* at the Wilderness, nor at that terrific repulse we had at Cold Harbour, such absolute slaughter as I saw that afternoon on the green slope of Malvern Hill. The guns of the entire army were massed on the crest, and thirty thousand of our infantry lay, musket in hand, in front. For eight hundred yards the hill sank in easy declension to the wood, and across this smooth expanse the Rebs must charge to reach our lines. It was nothing short of downright insanity to order men to charge that hill; and so his generals told Lee, but he would not listen to reason that day, and so he sent regiment after regiment, and brigade after brigade, and division after division, to certain death. Talk about Grant's disregard of human life, his effort at Cold Harbour—and I ought to know, for I got a minie in my shoulder that day—was hopeful and easy work to what Lee laid on Hill's and Magruder's divisions at Malvern. It was at the close of the second charge, when the yelling mass reeled back from before the blaze of those sixty guns and thirty thousand rifles, even as they began to break and fly backward toward the wood, that I saw from the spot where I lay a riderless horse break out of the confused and flying mass, and, with mane and tail erect and spreading nostril, come dashing obliquely down the slope. Over fallen steeds and heaps of the dead she leaped with a motion as airy as that of the flying fox when, fresh and unjaded, he leads away from the hounds, whose sudden cry has broken him off from hunting mice amid the bogs of the meadow. So this riderless horse came vaulting along. Now from my earliest boyhood I have had what horsemen call a " weakness " for horses. Only give me a colt of wild irregular temper and fierce blood to tame, and I am perfectly happy. Never did lash of mine, singing with cruel sound through the air, fall on such a colt's soft hide. Never did yell or kick send his hot blood from heart to head deluging his sensitive brain with fiery currents, driving him into frenzy or blinding him with fear; but touches, soft and gentle as a woman's, caressing words, and oats given from the open palm, and unfailing kindness, were the means I used to " subjugate " him. Sweet subjugation, both to him who subdues and to him who yields! The wild, unmannerly, and unmanageable colt, the fear of horsemen the country round, finding in you not an enemy, but a friend, receiving his daily food from you, and all those little " nothings " which go as far with a horse as a woman, to win and retain affection, grows to look upon you as his protector and friend, and testifies in countless ways his fondness for you. So when I saw this horse, with action so free and motion so graceful, amid that storm of bullets, my heart involuntarily went out to her, and my feelings rose higher and higher at every leap she took from amid the whirlwind of fire and lead. And as she plunged at last over a little hillock out of range and came careering toward me as only a riderless horse might come, her head flung wildly from side to

side, her nostrils widely spread, her flank and shoulders flecked with foam, her eye dilating, I forgot my wound and all the wild roar of battle, and, lifting myself involuntarily to a sitting posture as she swept grandly by, gave her a ringing cheer.

Perhaps in the sound of a human voice of happy mood amid the awful din she recognised a resemblance to the voice of him whose blood moistened her shoulders and was even yet dripping from saddle and housings. Be that as it may, no sooner had my voice sounded than she flung her head with a proud upward movement into the air, swerved sharply to the left, neighed as she might to a master at morning from her stall, and came trotting directly up to where I lay, and, pausing, looked down upon me as it were in compassion. I spoke again, and stretched out my hand caressingly. She pricked her ears, took a step forward, and lowered her nose until it came in contact with my palm. Never did I fondle anything more tenderly, never did I see an animal which seemed to so court and appreciate human tenderness as that beautiful mare. I say "beautiful." No other word might describe her. Never will her image fade from my memory while memory lasts.

In weight she might have turned, when well conditioned, nine hundred and fifty pounds. In colour she was a dark chestnut, with a velvety depth and soft look about the hair indescribably rich and elegant. Many a time have I heard ladies dispute the shade and hue of her plush-like coat as they ran their white, jewelled fingers through her silken hair. Her body was round in the barrel and perfectly symmetrical. She was wide in the haunches, without projection of the hip-bones, upon which the shorter ribs seemed to lap. High in the withers as she was, the line of her back and neck perfectly curved, while her deep, oblique shoulders and long, thick forearm, ridgy with swelling sinews, suggested the perfection of stride and power. Her knees across the pan were wide, the cannon-bone below them short and thin; the pasterns long and sloping; her hoofs round, dark, shiny, and well set on. Her mane was a shade darker than her coat, fine and thin, as a thoroughbred's always is whose blood is without taint or cross. Her ear was thin, sharply pointed, delicately curved, nearly black around the borders, and as tremulous as the leaves of an aspen. Her neck rose from the withers to the head in perfect curvature, hard, devoid of fat, and well cut up under the chops. Her nostrils were full, very full, and thin almost as parchment. The eyes, from which tears might fall or fire flash, were well brought out, soft as a gazelle's, almost human in their intelligence, while over the small bony head, over neck and shoulders, yea, over the whole body and clean down to the hoofs, the veins stood out as if the skin were but tissue-paper against which the warm blood pressed, and which it might at any moment burst asunder. "A perfect animal," I said to myself as I lay looking her over—"an animal which might have been born from the

wind and the sunshine, so cheerful and so swift she seems; an animal which a man would present as his choicest gift to the woman he loved, and yet one which that woman, wife or lady-love, would give him to ride when honour and life depended on bottom and speed."

All that afternoon the beautiful mare stood over me, while away to the right of us the hoarse tide of battle flowed and ebbed. What charm, what delusion of memory held her there? Was my face to her as the face of her dead master, sleeping a sleep from which not even the wildest roar of battle, no, nor her cheerful neigh at morning, would ever wake him? Or is there in animals some instinct, answering to our intuition, only more potent, which tells them whom to trust and whom to avoid? I know not, and yet some such sense they may have, they must have; or else why should this mare so fearlessly attach herself to me? By what process of reason or instinct I know not, but there she chose me for her master; for when some of my men at dusk came searching, and found me, and, laying me on a stretcher, started toward our lines, the mare, uncompelled, of her own free will, followed at my side; and all through that stormy night of wind and rain, as my men struggled along through the mud and mire toward Harrison's Landing, the mare followed, and ever after, until she died, was with me, and was mine, and I, so far as man might be, was hers. I named her Gulnare.

As quickly as my wound permitted, I was transported to Washington, whither I took the mare with me. Her fondness for me grew daily, and soon became so marked as to cause universal comment. I had her boarded while in Washington at the corner of —— Street and —— Avenue. The groom had instructions to lead her around to the window against which was my bed, at the hospital, twice every day, so that by opening the sash I might reach out my hand and pet her. But the second day, no sooner had she reached the street that she broke suddenly from the groom and dashed away at full speed. I was lying, bolstered up in bed, reading, when I heard the rush of flying feet, and in an instant, with a loud, joyful neigh, she checked herself in front of my window. And when the nurse lifted the sash, the beautiful creature thrust her head through the aperture, and rubbed her nose against my shoulder like a dog. I am not ashamed to say that I put both my arms around her neck, and, burying my face in her silken mane, kissed her again and again. Wounded, weak, and away from home, with only strangers to wait upon me, and scant service at that, the affection of this lovely creature for me, so tender and touching, seemed almost human, and my heart went out to her beyond any power of expression, as to the only being, of all the thousands around me, who thought of me and loved me. Shortly after her appearance at my window, the groom, who had divined where he should find her, came into the yard. But she would not allow him to come near her, much less touch her. If he tried to approach she would lash out at him with her heels

most spitefully, and then, laying back her ears and opening her mouth savagely, would make a short dash at him, and, as the terrified African disappeared around the corner of the hospital, she would wheel, and, with a face bright as a happy child's, come trotting to the window for me to pet her. I shouted to the groom to go back to the stable, for I had no doubt but that she would return to her stall when I closed the window. Rejoiced at the permission, he departed. After some thirty minutes, the last ten of which she was standing with her slim, delicate head in my lap, while I braided her foretop and combed out her silken mane, I lifted her head, and, patting her softly on either cheek, told her that she must "go." I gently pushed her head out of the window and closed it, and then, holding up my hand, with the palm turned toward her, charged her, making the appropriate motion, to "go away right straight back to her stable." For a moment she stood looking steadily at me, with an indescribable expression of hesitation and surprise in her clear, liquid eyes, and then, turning lingeringly, walked slowly out of the yard.

Twice a day for nearly a month, while I lay in the hospital, did Gulnare visit me. At the appointed hour the groom would slip her headstall, and, without a word of command, she would dart out of the stable, and, with her long, leopard-like lope, go sweeping down the street and come dashing into the hospital yard, checking herself with the same glad neigh at my window; nor did she ever once fail, at the closing of the sash, to return directly to her stall. The groom informed me that every morning and evening, when the hour of her visit drew near, she would begin to chafe and worry, and, by pawing and pulling at the halter, advertise him that it was time for her to be released.

But of all exhibitions of happiness, either by beast or man, hers was the most positive on that afternoon when, racing into the yard, she found me leaning on a crutch outside the hospital building. The whole corps of nurses came to the doors, and all the poor fellows that could move themselves—for Gulnare had become a universal favourite, and the boys looked for her daily visits nearly, if not quite, as ardently as I did—crawled to the windows to see her. What gladness was expressed in every movement! She would come prancing toward me, head and tail erect, and, pausing, rub her head against my shoulder, while I patted her glossy neck; then suddenly, with a sidewise spring, she would break away, and with her long tail elevated until her magnificent brush, fine and silken as the golden hair of a blonde, fell in a great spray on either flank, and, her head curved to its proudest arch, pace around me with that high action and springing step peculiar to the thoroughbred. Then like a flash, dropping her brush and laying back her ears and stretching her nose straight out, she would speed away with that quick, nervous, low-lying action which marks the rush of racers, when side by side

and nose to nose lapping each other, with the roar of cheers on either hand and along the seats above them, they come straining up the home stretch. Returning from one of these arrowy flights, she would come curvetting back, now pacing sidewise as on parade, now dashing her hind feet high into the air, and anon vaulting up and springing through the air, with legs well under her, as if in the act of taking a five-barred gate, and finally would approach and stand happy in her reward—my caress.

The war, at last, was over. Gulnare and I were in at the death with Sheridan at the Five Forks. Together we had shared the pageant at Richmond and Washington, and never had I seen her in better spirits than on that day at the capital. It was a sight indeed to see her as she came down Pennsylvania Avenue. If the triumphant procession had been all in her honour and mine, she could not have moved with greater grace and pride. With dilating eye and tremulous ear, ceaselessly champing her bit, her heated blood bringing out the magnificent lacework of veins over her entire body, now and then pausing, and with a snort gathering herself back upon her haunches as for a mighty leap, while she shook the froth from her bits, she moved with a high, prancing step down the magnificent street, the admired of all beholders. Cheer after cheer was given, huzza after huzza rang out over her head from roofs and balcony, bouquet after bouquet was launched by fair and enthusiastic admirers before her; and yet, amid the crash and swell of music, the cheering and tumult, so gentle and manageable was she, that, though I could feel her frame creep and tremble under me as she moved through that whirlwind of excitement, no check or curb was needed, and the bridle-lines—the same she wore when she came to me at Malvern Hill—lay unlifted on the pommel of the saddle. Never before had I seen her so grandly herself. Never before had the fire and energy, the grace and gentleness, of her blood so revealed themselves. This was the day and the event she needed. And all the royalty of her ancestral breed—a race of equine kings—flowing as without taint or cross from him that was the pride and wealth of the whole tribe of desert rangers, expressed itself in her. I need not say that I shared her mood. I sympathised in her every step. I entered into all her royal humours. I patted her neck and spoke loving and cheerful words to her. I called her my beauty, my pride, my pet. And did she not understand me? Every word! Else why that listening ear turned back to catch my softest whisper; why the responsive quiver through the frame, and the low, happy neigh? "Well," I exclaimed, as I leaped from her back at the close of the review—alas! that words spoken in lightest mood should portend so much!—"well, Gulnare, if you should die, your life has had its triumph. The nation itself, through its admiring capital, has paid tribute to your beauty, and death can never rob you of your fame." And I patted her moist neck and foam-flecked

shoulders, while the grooms were busy with head and loins.

That night our brigade made its bivouac just over Long Bridge, almost on the identical spot where, four years before, I had camped my company of three months' volunteers. With what experiences of march and battle were those four years filled! For three of these years Gulnare had been my constant companion. With me she had shared my tent, and not rarely my rations, for in appetite she was truly human, and my steward always counted her as one of our "mess." Twice had she been wounded—once at Fredericksburg, through the thigh; and once at Cold Harbour, where a piece of shell tore away a part of her scalp. So completely did it stun her, that for some moments I thought her dead, but to my great joy she shortly recovered her senses. I had the wound carefully dressed by our brigade surgeon, from whose care she came in a month with the edges of the wound so nicely united that the eye could with difficulty detect the scar. This night, as usual, she lay at my side, her head almost touching mine. Never before, unless when on a raid and in face of the enemy, had I seen her so uneasy. Her movements during the night compelled wakefulness on my part. The sky was cloudless, and in the dim light I lay and watched her. Now she would stretch herself at full length, and rub her head on the ground. Then she would start up, and, sitting on her haunches, like a dog, lift one foreleg and paw her neck and ears. Anon she would rise to her feet and shake herself, walk off a few rods, return and lie down again by my side. I did not know what to make of it, unless the excitement of the day had been too much for her sensitive nerves. I spoke to her kindly and petted her. In response she would rub her nose against me, and lick my hand with her tongue—a peculiar habit of hers—like a dog. As I was passing my hand over her head, I discovered that it was hot, and the thought of the old wound flashed into my mind, with a momentary fear that something might be wrong about her brain, but after thinking it over I dismissed it as incredible. Still I was alarmed. I knew that something was amiss, and I rejoiced at the thought that I should soon be at home where she could have quiet, and, if need be, the best of nursing. At length the morning dawned, and the mare and I took our last meal together on Southern soil—the last we ever took together. The brigade was formed in line for the last time, and as I rode down the front to review the boys she moved with all her old battle grace and power. Only now and then, by a shake of the head, was I reminded of her actions during the night. I said a few words of farewell to the men whom I had led so often to battle, with whom I had shared perils not a few, and by whom, as I had reason to think, I was loved, and then gave, with a voice slightly unsteady, the last order they would ever receive from me: "Brigade, Attention, Ready to break ranks, *Break Ranks*." The order was obeyed. But ere they scattered, moved by a common

impulse, they gave first three cheers for me, and then, with the same heartiness and even more power, three cheers for Gulnare. And she, standing there, looking with her bright, cheerful countenance full at the men, pawing with her forefeet, alternately, the ground, seemed to understand the compliment; for no sooner had the cheering died away than she arched her neck to its proudest curve, lifted her thin, delicate head into the air, and gave a short, joyful neigh.

My arrangements for transporting her had been made by a friend the day before. A large, roomy car had been secured, its floor strewn with bright, clean straw, a bucket and a bag of oats provided, and everything done for her comfort. The car was to be attached to the through express, in consideration of fifty dollars extra, which I gladly paid, because of the greater rapidity with which it enabled me to make my journey. As the brigade broke up into groups, I glanced at my watch and saw that I had barely time to reach the cars before they started. I shook the reins upon her neck, and with a plunge, startled at the energy of my signal, away she flew. What a stride she had! What an elastic spring! She touched and left the earth as if her limbs were of spiral wire. When I reached the car my friend was standing in front of it, the gang-plank was ready, I leaped from the saddle and, running up the plank into the car, whistled to her; and she, timid and hesitating, yet unwilling to be separated from me, crept slowly and cautiously up the steep incline and stood beside me. Inside I found a complete suit of flannel clothes, with a blanket and, better than all, a lunch-basket. My friend explained that he had bought the clothes as he came down to the depot, thinking, as he said, "that they would be much better than your regimentals," and suggested that I doff the one and don the other. To this I assented the more readily as I reflected that I would have to pass one night at least in the car, with no better bed than the straw under my feet. I had barely time to undress before the cars were coupled and started. I tossed the clothes to my friend with the injunction to pack them in my trunk and express them on to me, and waved him my adieu. I arrayed myself in the nice, cool flannel and looked around. The thoughtfulness of my friend had anticipated every want. An old cane-seated chair stood in one corner. The lunch-basket was large and well supplied. Amid the oats I found a dozen oranges, some bananas, and a package of real Havana cigars. How I called down blessings on his thoughtful head as I took the chair and, lighting one of the fine-flavoured *figaros*, gazed out on the fields past which we were gliding, yet wet with morning dew. As I sat dreamily admiring the beauty before me, Gulnare came and, resting her head upon my shoulder, seemed to share my mood. As I stroked her fine-haired, satin-like nose, recollection quickened and memories of our companionship in perils thronged into my mind. I rode

again that midnight ride to Knoxville, when Burnside lay intrenched, desperately holding his own, waiting for news from Chattanooga of which I was the bearer, chosen by Grant himself because of the reputation of my mare. What riding that was! We started, ten riders of us in all, each with the same message. I parted company the first hour out with all save one, an iron-grey stallion of Messenger blood. Jack Murdock rode him, who learned his horsemanship from buffalo and Indian hunting on the plains—not a bad school to graduate from. Ten miles out of Knoxville the grey, his flanks dripping with blood, plunged up abreast of the mare's shoulders and fell dead ; and Gulnare and I passed through the lines alone. *I had ridden the terrible race without whip or spur.* With what scenes of blood and flight she would ever be associated!

And then I thought of home, unvisited for four long years—that home I left a stripling, but to which I was returning a bronzed and brawny man. I thought of mother and Bob—how they would admire her!—of old Ben, the family groom, and of that one who shall be nameless, whose picture I had so often shown to Gulnare as the likeness of her future mistress ; had they not all heard of her, my beautiful mare, she who came to me from the smoke and whirlwind, my battle-gift? How they would pat her soft, smooth sides, and tie her mane with ribbons, and feed her with all sweet things from open and caressing palm! And then I thought of one who might come after her to bear her name and repeat at least some portion of her beauty—a horse honoured and renowned the country through, because of the transmission of the mother's fame.

About three o'clock in the afternoon a change came over Gulnare. I had fallen asleep upon the straw, and she had come and awakened me with a touch of her nose. The moment I started up I saw that something was the matter. Her eyes were dull and heavy. Never before had I seen the light go out of them. The rocking of the car as it went jumping and vibrating along seemed to irritate her. She began to rub her head against the side of the car. Touching it, I found that the skin over the brain was hot as fire. Her breathing grew rapidly louder and louder. Each breath was drawn with a kind of gasping effort. The lids with their silken fringe drooped wearily over the lustreless eyes. The head sank lower and lower, until the nose almost touched the floor. The ears, naturally so lively and erect, hung limp and widely apart. The body was cold and senseless. A pinch elicited no motion. Even my voice was at last unheeded. To word and touch there came, for the first time in all our intercourse, no response. I knew as the symptoms spread what was the matter. The signs bore all one way. She was in the first stages of phrenitis, or inflammation of the brain. In other words, *my beautiful mare was going mad.*

I was well versed in the anatomy of the horse. Loving horses from my very childhood, there was little in veterinary practice with

which I was not familiar. Instinctively, as soon as the symptoms had developed themselves, and I saw under what frightful disorder Gulnare was labouring, I put my hand into my pocket for my knife, in order to open a vein. *There was no knife there.* Friends, I have met with many surprises. More than once in battle and scout have I been nigh death; but never did my blood desert my veins and settle so around the heart, never did such a sickening sensation possess me, as when, standing in that car with my beautiful mare before me marked with those horrible symptoms, I made that discovery. My knife, my sword, my pistols even, were with my suit in the care of my friend, two hundred miles away. Hastily, and with trembling fingers, I searched my clothes, the lunch-basket, my linen; not even a pin could I find. I shoved open the sliding door, and swung my hat and shouted, hoping to attract some brakesman's attention. The train was thundering along at full speed, and none saw or heard me. I knew her stupor would not last long. A slight quivering of the lip, an occasional spasm running through the frame, told me too plainly that the stage of frenzy would soon begin. "My God," I exclaimed in despair, as I shut the door and turned toward her, "must I see you die, Gulnare, when the opening of a vein would save you? Have you borne me, my pet, through all these years of peril, the icy chill of winter, the heat and torment of summer, and all the thronging dangers of a hundred bloody battles, only to die torn by fierce agonies, when so near a peaceful home?"

But little time was give me to mourn. My life was soon to be in peril, and I must summon up the utmost power of eye and limb to escape the violence of my frenzied mare. Did you ever see a mad horse when his madness is on him? Take your stand with me in that car, and you shall see what suffering a dumb creature can endure before it dies. In no malady does a horse suffer more than in phrenitis, or inflammation of the brain. Possibly in severe cases of colic, probably in rabies in its fiercest form, the pain is equally intense. These three are the most agonising of all the diseases to which the noblest of animals is exposed. Had my pistols been with me, I should then and there, with whatever strength Heaven granted, have taken my companion's life, that she might be spared the suffering which was so soon to rack and wring her sensitive frame. A horse labouring under an attack of phrenitis is as violent as a horse can be. He is not ferocious as is one in a fit of rabies. He may kill his master, but he does it without design. There is in him no desire of mischief for its own sake, no cruel cunning, no stratagem and malice. A rabid horse is conscious in every act and motion. He recognises the man he destroys. There is in him an insane *desire* to *kill*. Not so with the phrenetic horse. He is unconscious in his violence. He sees and recognises no one. There is no method or purpose in his madness. He kills without knowing it.

I knew what was coming. I could not jump out, that would be certain death. I must abide in the car, and take my chance of life. The car was fortunately high, long, and roomy. I took my position in front of my horse, watchful, and ready to spring. Suddenly her lids, which had been closed, came open with a snap, as if an electric shock had passed through her, and the eyes, wild in their brightness, stared directly at me. And what eyes they were! The membrane grew red and redder until it was of the colour of blood, standing out in frightful contrast with the transparency of the cornea. The pupil gradually dilated until it seemed about to burst out of the socket. The nostrils, which had been sunken and motionless, quivered, swelled, and glowed. The respiration became short, quick, and gasping. The limp and dripping ears stiffened and stood erect, pricked sharply forward, as if to catch the slightest sound. Spasms, as the car swerved and vibrated, ran along her frame. More horrid than all, the lips slowly contracted, and the white, sharp-edged teeth stood uncovered, giving an indescribable look of ferocity to the partially opened mouth. The car suddenly reeled as it dashed around a curve, swaying her almost off her feet, and, as a contortion shook her, she recovered herself, and rearing upward as high as the car permitted, plunged directly at me. I was expecting the movement, and dodged. Then followed exhibitions of pain which I pray God I may never see again. Time and again did she dash herself upon the floor, and roll over and over, lashing out with her feet in all directions. Pausing a moment, she would stretch her body to its extreme length, and, lying upon her side, pound the floor with her head as if it were a maul. Then like a flash she would leap to her feet, and whirl round and round until from very giddiness she would stagger and fall. She would lay hold of the straw with her teeth, and shake it as a dog shakes a struggling woodchuck; then dashing it from her mouth, she would seize hold of her own sides, and rend herself. Springing up, she she would rush against the end of the car, falling all in a heap from the violence of the concussion. For some fifteen minutes without intermission the frenzy lasted. I was nearly exhausted. My efforts to avoid her mad rushes, the terrible tension of my nervous system, produced by the spectacle of such exquisite and prolonged suffering, were weaking me beyond what I should have thought it possible an hour before for anything to weaken me. In fact, I felt my strength leaving me. A terror such as I had never yet felt was taking possession of my mind. I sickened at the sight before me, and at the thought of agonies yet to come. "My God," I exclaimed, "must I be killed by my own horse in this miserable car!" Even as I spoke the end came. The mare raised herself until her shoulders touched the roof, then dashed her body upon the floor with a violence which threatened the stout frame beneath her. I leaned, panting and exhausted, against the side of the car. Gulnare did not

stir. She lay motionless, her breath coming and going in lessening respirations. I tottered toward her, and, as I stood above her, my ear detected a low gurgling sound. I cannot describe the feeling that followed. Joy and grief contended within me. I knew the meaning of that sound. Gulnare, in her frenzied violence, had broken a blood-vessel, and was bleeding internally. Pain and life were passing away together. I knelt down by her side. I laid my head upon her shoulders and sobbed aloud. Her body moved a little beneath me. I crawled forward, and lifted her beautiful head into my lap. O, for one more sign of recognition before she died! I smoothed the tangled masses of her mane. I wiped, with a fragment of my coat, torn in the struggle, the blood which oozed from her nostril. I called her by name. My desire was granted. In a moment Gulnare opened her eyes. The redness of frenzy had passed out of them. She saw and recognised me. I spoke again. Her eye lighted a moment with the old and intelligent look of love. Her ear moved. Her nostril quivered slightly as she strove to neigh. The effort was in vain. Her love was greater than her strength. She moved her head a little, as if she would be nearer me, looked once more with her clear eyes into my face, breathed a long breath, straightened her shapely limbs, and died. And there, holding the head of my dead mare in my lap, while the great warm tears fell one after another down my cheeks, I sat until the sun went down, the shadows darkened in the car, and night drew her mantle, coloured like my grief, over the world.

LOUISE STOCKTON

circa 1840

KIRBY'S COALS OF FIRE

CONSIDERING it simply as an excursion, George Scott thought, leaning over the side of the canal-boat and looking at the shadow of the hills in the water, his plan for spending his summer vacation might be a success, but he was not so sure about his opportunities for studying human nature under the worst conditions. It was true that the conditions were bad enough, but so were the results, and George was not in search of logical sequences. He had been in the habit of saying that nothing interested him as much as the study of his fellows; and that he was in earnest was proved by the fact that even his college experiences had not yet disheartened him, although they had cost him not a few neckties and coats, and sometimes too many of his dollars. But George had higher aspirations, and was not disposed to be satisfied with the opportunities presented by crude collegians or even learned professors, and so meant to go out among men. When he was younger,—a year or two before—he had dreamed of a mission among the Indians, fancying that he would reach original principles among them; but the Modocs and Captain Jack had lowered his faith, while the Rev. Dr. Buck's story of how the younger savages had been taught to make beds and clean knives, until they preferred these civilised occupations to their old habit of scampering through the woods, had dispelled more of the glitter, and he had resolved to confine his labours to his white brethren. He did not mean to seek his opportunities among the rich, nor among the monotonously dreary poor of the city, but in a fresher field. Like most theological students, he was well read in current literature, and he had learned how often the noblest virtues are found among the roughest classes. It was true, they were sometimes so latent that like the jewel in a toad's head they had the added grace of unexpectedness, but that did not interfere with the fact of their existence. He had read of California gamblers who had rushed from tables where they had sat with bowie-knives between their teeth, to warn a coming train of broken rails, and, when picked up maimed and dying, had simply asked if the children were saved, and then, content, had turned aside and died. He knew the story of the Mississippi engineer who, going home with a long-sought fortune to claim his waiting bride, had saved his boat from wreck

by supplying the want of fuel by hat, coat, boots, wedding-clothes, gloves, favours, and finally his bag of greenbacks and Northern Pacific bonds, then returning to his duty, sans money, sans wife, but plus honour and a rewarding conscience. When men are capable of such heroism, George would say, arguing from these and similar stories, they are open to true reformation, all that is necessary being some exercise of an influence that shall make such impulses constant instead of spasmodic.

About noon he had not been quite so sanguine regarding his mission, and had almost resolved that when they reached Springfield he would return East and join some of his class who were going to the Kaatskills. The sun was then pouring down directly on the boat, the cabin was stifling, the horses crept sluggishly along, the men were rude and brutal, and around him was an atmosphere of frying fish and boiling cabbage. The cabbage was perhaps the crowning evil ; for while he found it possible to force his ear and eye to be deaf and blind to the disagreeable, he had no amount of will that could conquer the sense of smell. There seemed to be little, he thought, with some contempt for his expectations, to reward his quest or maintain his theory that every one had at least one story to tell. It was not necessarily one's own story, he had said, but lives the most barren in incident come into contact with those more vehement, and have the chance of looking into tragedies, into moral victories and fierce conflicts, through other men's eyes. He had hinted something of this to Joe Lakin early in the morning, when the mist was rising off the hills, when the air was fresh and keen, and the sun was making the long lines of oil upon the river glitter like so many brilliant snakes. Joe was the laziest and roughest of the men on the boat, but he sometimes had such a genial and even superior manner, that George had felt sure that he would comprehend his meaning. Thus when noon came, hot, close, and heavy with prophecy of dinner, George had sickened of human nature and of psychological studies ; but now the sun had set, and a golden glory lit the sky ; the fields on one side of the river rolled away green in clover and wavy in corn, the hills heavily wooded rose high and picturesquely on the other side, and the little island in the bend of the river seemed the home of quiet and of peace. The horses plodded patiently through the water, going out on the shallows and avoiding the deeper currents near the shore, and the boys, forgetting to shout and swear, rode along softly whistling. Over by the hills stood a cottage, and in the terraced garden a group of girls with bright ribbons in their hair were playing quoits with horseshoes. A rowboat was carrying passengers over the river to meet the evening train, and under the sweetness of the twilight George's spirits arose lightly to their level, his old faith returned to him, and he looked up with a new sense of fellowship to Joe, who was filling his pipe with his favourite " towhead."

It's a pity you don't smoke," said Joe, carefully striking a match and holding his cap before it, " for it seems a gift thrown away; and this tobacco is uncommon good, though you might fancy it a notion too strong. I've noticed that most preachers smoke, although they don't take kindly to drinking. I suppose they think it wouldn't seem the proper thing, and perhaps it wouldn't; but there's Parson Robinson—I should think that a good, solid drink would be a real comfort to him sometimes. He's got a hard pull of it with a half share of victuals and a double share of children, so the two ends hardly ever see each other, much less think of meeting."

George hesitated for reply. He thought Joe was unnecessarily rough at times, and alluded to the ministry much too frequently. He had fancied when he left home that his blue flannel and grey tweed, with rather a jovial manner, would divest him of all resemblance to a theological student, and enable him to meet his companions on the ground of a common humanity, especially as he had at present no missionary intentions excepting those that might flow indirectly from his personal influence. Still, while he wanted Joe to recognise his broad liberality, he owed it to himself not to be loose in his expression of opinion.

" Well, yes," he said slowly, " I suppose it would help a man to forget his troubles for a time, but the getting over the spree and coming back to the same old bothers, not a bit better for the forgetting, would hardly be much comfort, even if the thing were right."

" Maybe not," replied Joe; " I s'pose it wouldn't be comfortable if those were your feelin's, but I reckon you don't know much about it unless from hearsay. But I tell you one thing, whisky's a friend to be trusted "—adding, slowly, with a glance at George's face—" to get you into trouble if you let it get the upper hand of you. It's like a woman in that! It begins with the same letter too, and that's another likeness!"

George made no answer to this joke, over which Joe chuckled enough for both, and then returned to the charge:

" I've seen a good deal of life, one way and another," Joe said, " but I don't know much of parsons. Somehow they haven't been in my line; but if I had to choose between being a parson or a doctor, I'd take the doctor by long odds. You see the world's pretty much of a hospital as far as he's concerned, and when he can't tinker a man up, he lets him slide off and nobody minds; but the parson's different. When a man takes sick he looks kind of friendly on the doctor, because, you see, he expects him to cure him; but when the parson comes, he tells him what a miserable sinner he is and what he's coming to at last. Now, it ain't in nature to like that, and I don't blame the fellows who say they can stand a parson when they are well, but that he's worse than a break-bone fever and no water handy when they're sick. And I shouldn't think any man

would like to go about making himself unpleasant to others! Leastways, I wouldn't. Kicking Kirby used to say that he'd rather be a woman than a parson, and the force of language couldn't go further than that! He knew what he was talking about, for some of his folks were preachers; and there was good in Kirby, too! People may say what they please, but I'll allers hold to *that*!"

"Who was he?" asked George, happy to change the subject, being a little uneasy in his hold upon it, and hopeful of a story at last.

Joe looked over the hills.

"Well, he was a friend of mine when I was prospecting for oil once. I allers liked Kicking Kirby."

George sat patiently waiting, while Jim refilled his pipe and then began:

"There ain't so much to tell, but men do curious things sometimes, and Kirby, I guess, was a man few folks would have expected very much of. There was hard things said of him, but he could allers strike a blow for a friend, or hold his own with the next man, let him be who might. You see, there were a good many of us in camp, and we had fair enough luck; for the men over at Digger's Run had struck a good vein, so money was plenty and changed hands fast enough. We'd all hung together in our camp until Clint Bowers got into trouble. None of the rest of us wanted to get mixed up in the fuss, but somehow we did, and the other camp fought shy of us and played mostly among themselves; and I've allers held that it is poor fun to take out of one pocket to put into the other. Our boys had different opinions about it, and some of them held that it wasn't Clint's awkward work that they'd got mad at, but that they meant to shut down on Kirby. You see, Kirby was a very lucky player, and although pretty rough things were said about it, nobody ever got a clear handle against him, and he wasn't the kind of fellow that was pleasant to affront. Kirby used to say it was all along of Clint; that he ought to have been kept from the cards, or sent down the river; that we'd have had a good run of luck all winter if it hadn't been for him. I don't know the rights properly, but I allers thought it was about six of one and a half dozen of the other. Anyhow, there was bad blood about it, and *that* don't run uphill, you know, and so there was trouble soon enough. The boys got into words one night, and Kirby threw a mug at Clint, who out with his knife and was at Kirby like a flash. Lucky for him Clint's eyes weren't in good seeing order, and the liquor hadn't made his arm any the more steady, so Kirby only got a scratch on his arm. It showed what Clint would like to do, though, and some of the boys made pretty heavy bets on the end of it. I stuck up for Kirby, for you see I knew him pretty well, and there was true grit in him; and then, too, he was oncommon pleasant about it, and even stopped saying much about Clint's blocking up our luck over at the Run.

"Well, just about then Jack White came over from Cambria and

told Clint that he'd heard that his uncle was asking around where he was. You see, Clint's uncle had a store down there, and had made a tidy pile of money, and as he hadn't any children, he said he wouldn't mind leaving it to him if he was living respectable. Clint had lived with him when he was a boy, but they hadn't got along very well, so Clint ran off. The old man didn't mind this, though, and now he wanted to find him. Jack said he was sure that if Clint was to go over and play his cards right he'd get the money. You may be sure this was a stroke of luck for Clint just then, and he didn't like to lose it; but you see he didn't look very genteel, and he knew his uncle was sharp enough to find it out. He was fat enough, for whisky never made a living skeleton of him, but it was plain that it wasn't good health that had made his nose so red, nor fine manners that had given him the cut across his cheek and bruised up his eye. The boys all allowed that he was the hardest-looking chap in the camp, and if his uncle left him his money, it wouldn't be on the strength of his good countenance! But you know he had to do something right off, and so he wrote as pretty a letter to the old man as ever I want to see; but when the answer came it said his uncle was very sick, and as he had something particular to say to him, wouldn't Clint come over at once, and enclosed he'd find the money for his fare. I tell you this stumped Clint, for he'd had another fight, and was a picture to behold.

"But here's where the surprise to us all came in. Clint was pretty well puzzled what to do, and while all the boys were advising him, Kirby spoke up. I'd noticed he was pretty quiet, but nobody could have guessed what he was thinking about. He looked some like Clint, and once had been pitched into by a new Digger's Run boy for Clint. The fellow never made the second mistake about them. It wasn't as though they were twins, but they both had brown hair and long beards, blue eyes, and were about the same build, so you couldn't have made a descriptive list of the one that wouldn't have done for the other. What Kirby said was that Clint's uncle hadn't seen him since he was a boy, and he'd expect to find him changed; and although he—that's Kirby, you know—had had hard feelin's to Clint, he wasn't a man to hold a grudge, and he'd let bygones be bygones. So if Clint thought well of it, he'd go over to Cambria, and if he found the land lay right he'd pass off for him, and make things sure.

"This struck us all of a heap, for we knew Kirby could do it if he chose and if nobody interfered with him, and that he really could cajole the old man better than Clint could; for when that fellow got wound up to talk he was allers going you five better. Some of the boys thought it rather risky, and they wanted Clint to write and say he had the typhoid fever, and so stave it off until he looked fit to go; but he knew that if he crossed his uncle now he'd likely enough lose everything, and so he thought it best to make sure and

let Kirby go and see, anyhow. One thing that helped Kirby along was that his first wife had come from Cambria, and he'd heard her talk so much about the people that he knew nearly as much of them as Clint did. To make the matter sure, Clint stuffed him with all he remembered, and one night we got up a-practising ; and we made out that we were the folks, and Kirby pow-wowed to the minister, and old Miss Cranby—that was me !—and the doctor, until he knew his lesson and we'd nearly split our sides laughing.

" Of course, seeing the interest we all took in it, we weren't going to do the thing half, so we clubbed together and got Kirby a suit of storeclothes and a shiny valise, and he went off as proper as a parson—begging your pardon !—and we settled down again. He wrote pretty prompt, and said everything was going on as smooth as oil. The old man had called out that it was Clint as soon as he saw him, before he'd said a word, and Kirby wrote it would have been kind of cruel to have told him better. So he didn't. He wrote several more letters, and once Jack White had a letter from his sister saying that Clint Bowers had come home, and it was said that the old man was tickled to death with his manners, and meant to leave him all he had. This clinched it sure enough, and Clint became tip-top among the boys, and his credit was good for all the drinks he chose to order, and I must say he was liberal enough, and nobody contradicted him. He wrote to Kirby—he was all the time writing to him—but this time he told how handsome he thought it was in him to do all this, considering everything. When the answer came, Kirby said he didn't profess much religion, and he thought that generally speakin' heaping coals of fire on any one's head was against the grain, but Clint was more than welcome to his services."

" He *was* a good fellow," exclaimed George. " I don't wonder you liked him ! "

" Yes, *I* allers stood up for Kirby when the boys were hardest on him. But to finish up, for I'm telling an oncommon long yarn, at last a letter came saying that the old man was dead, and the money fixed. How much it was Kirby couldn't say yet, but he meant to hurry matters up, he said. Of course he didn't put all he meant into plain words, for it wouldn't do to trust it, and he was allers more careful than Clint, who never knew when to hush. But now Kirby said he'd have everything straight inside of two weeks, and we weren't to look for another letter from him.

" Well, it *was* surprisin' how many birds Clint broiled for Kirby the next few weeks ! You see, Kirby allers was a gentleman in his tastes, and had a particular liking for birds on toast, and of course Clint wanted to give him a proper welcome home. We never knew just when the boats were likely to come, and Clint was allers ready for a surprise."

" And he came just when he was least expected," said George,

with a bright smile; "that is the way things always happen in this world. I am sure of that."

"Why no, bless your heart, *he* never came back! I allers knew he wouldn't. He bought a share in a circus with the money, and went down South. They said he married the girl who did the flying trapeze, but I'm not sure about that. Anyway it appears he's done a good business, and I'm sure he's kept Clint's letters to him. There was true grit in Kirby, I've allers stuck to *that*! Does the pipe seem too strong for you? The wind does blow it your way, that's a fact."

MAX ADELER
(CHAS. HEBER CLARK)
1841–1915

A DESPERATE ADVENTURE

WANTED, four persons who are bent upon commtting suicide, to engage in a hazardous adventure. Apply, etc., to Captain Cowgill, No.—, Blank Street, after nine o' clock in the morning.

CAPTAIN COWGILL inserted the above advertisement in three of the morning papers, with only a faint expectation that it would be responded to. But the result was that between nine o'clock and noon five men and two women called at his office to inquire respecting the nature of the proposed adventure, and to offer their services in the event that it should involve nothing of a criminal character. Of these seven, Captain Cowgill selected four, three men and one young woman ; and when he had dismissed the others, he shut the door and said to the four applicants :

" What I wanted you for was this : I have made up my mind that the North Pole can never be reached by an exploring party travelling upon ships and sledges. The only route that is possibly practicable is through the air, and the only available vehicle, of course, is a balloon. But an attempt to reach the Pole in a balloon must expose the explorers to desperate risks, and it occurred to me that those risks had better be taken by persons who do not value their lives, than by persons who do. It has always seemed to me that a part of the sin of suicide lies in the fact that the life wantonly sacrificed might have been expended in a cause which would have conferred benefits, directly or indirectly, upon the human race. I have a large and superbly equipped balloon, which will be thoroughly stocked for a voyage to the Arctic regions, and, among other things, it will contain apparatus for making fresh supplies of hydrogen gas. Are you four persons willing to make the required attempt in this balloon ? "

All four of the visitors answered, " Yes."

" Were you going to sacrifice your lives, at any rate ? "

An affirmative answer was given by the four.

" Permit me to take your names," said Captain Cowgill, and he wrote them down as follows :

WILLIAM P. CRUTTER,
DR. HENRY O'HAGAN,
EDMOND JARNVILLE,
MARY DERMOTT.

Mr. Crutter was a man apparently of about sixty years, handsomely dressed, manifestly a gentleman, but with a flushed face which indicated that he had perhaps indulged to some extent in dissipation.

Dr. O'Hagan was thin, pallid, and careworn. He looked as if he were ill, and as if all joy were dead in his heart.

Mr. Jarnville appeared to be a working-man, but his countenance, sad as it was, was full of intelligence, and his manner was that of a man who had occupied a social position much above the lowest.

Miss Dermott sat, with an air of dejection, her hands in her lap, a thin and faded shawl pinned about her, and with her pale cheeks suggestive of hunger and mental suffering.

"My hope," said Captain Cowgill, "is that you will safely reach your destination, and safely return. But you fully understand that the chances are against you. For my own protection I will ask you to certify in writing that you go with full knowledge of the risks. I will inflate the balloon to-morrow. Day after to-morrow come to this office at nine o'clock, and you shall then make the ascent at once."

On the appointed day the four volunteers appeared and Captain Cowgill drove with them, in a carriage, to a yard in the outskirts of the city, where the balloon, inflated and swaying to and fro in the wind, was held to the earth with stout ropes. The three men were supplied with warm clothing, but Miss Dermott had only her threadbare shawl, and so Captain Cowgill gave her his overcoat, and two blankets which he took from the carriage.

While the voyagers were taking their places in the commodious car attached to the balloon, a young man entered the yard and hurriedly approached Captain Cowgill.

"I am going with the balloon," he said, almost fiercely, and hardly deigning to look at the Captain.

"Impossible!" said the Captain. "The crew is made up. You don't comprehend our purpose."

"Yes, I do," said the young man. "These people are would-be suicides, and they are starting for the Pole. I am going along."

"But my dear sir——" began the Captain in a tone of expostulation.

"I will go, or I will slay myself right here before you! These people are not any more tired of life than I am,"

"Let him come," said Dr. O'Hagan, gloomily.

"But," returned Captain Cowgill, "I am afraid the balloon will be overloaded.

"I am going, anyhow," said the young man, as he leaped into the car.

Captain Cowgill sighed, and said, "Well, have your own way about it."

"My name is John Winden," remarked the intruder. "I tell you, so that you will know if any one inquires after me. But I don't imagine anybody will."

Then Captain Cowgill bade farewell to the party, the ropes were loosed, and the balloon went sailing swiftly towards the clouds. Dr. O'Hagan was the navigator in charge. Presently a north-easterly current of wind struck the air-ship, and it began to move with great rapidity upon a horizontal line.

For a long time nobody in the car spoke. Indeed, the voyagers scarcely looked at each other; and none had enough curiosity to peer over the side upon the glorious landscape that lay beneath. But, after awhile, Mr. Crutter, gazing at Miss Dermott, said:

"Are you fully resolved upon self-destruction?"

"Yes," she replied.

"So am I," said Mr. Crutter.

"So am I," remarked Mr. Winden.

"So am I," observed Mr. Jarnville.

"And I, also," added Dr. O'Hagan.

"Even if we reach the Pole safely, and return, I shall not want to live," said Mr. Crutter.

"Neither shall I," said Miss Dermott.

"Nor I," remarked Mr. Winden.

"Nor I," added Dr. O'Hagan and Mr. Jarnville in a breath.

Then there was silence for the space of half an hour or more.

Mr. Crutter then remarked: "Do you know, I find this to be rather a pleasant experience, sailing along here through the ether, calmly, far above the distractions of the world? If I were not so miserable I think I should really enjoy it!"

"I am too unhappy to enjoy anything," said Miss Dermott; but this, I confess, is not unpleasant."

"Pleasant enough," remarked Mr. Winden, "if a man had no anguish in his soul."

"I had no idea that there was so much exhilaration in the upper regions of the atmosphere," said Dr. O'Hagan, rather cheerily.

"I think I feel better, myself," said Mr. Jarnville.

"It is very strange," observed Mr. Crutter, addressing Miss Dermott, "that young people, like you and Mr. Winden here, should be weary of life. That an old man like me should long for death is comprehensible. But why do you wish to die?"

Neither Mr. Winden nor Miss Dermott made any response.

"I'll tell you," said Dr. O'Hagan, throwing a bag of ballast overboard, to check the descent of the balloon. "We are all going to destruction together; and why should we not, as companions in

misery, unfold our griefs to each other ? "

" It would be very proper, I think," said Mr. Crutter ; " and I will begin if the rest will consent to follow."

The other four travellers agreed to do so.

" Well, I haven't much to tell," said Mr. Crutter. " The fact is, I have always had plenty of money with which to live in idleness and luxury, and I have so lived. I have tried every kind of pleasure life can afford and money buy, and I have reached a condition of satiety. Moreover, I have ruined my digestion, and I am now a sufferer from chronic dyspepsia of a horrible kind. This makes existence a burden. I am eager to quit it. That is the whole story."

" How strange the difference between us ! " said Dr. O'Hagan. " I have been deeply engaged in the practice of my profession for many years ; and I am utterly worn-out and broken-down with overwork. I am nervous, exhausted, irritable, and wretched, but I have lost my savings in a speculative venture, and cannot rest. I must either work or die."

" That is partly my case," said Miss Dermott. " I am friendless and poor. I cannot earn enough by sewing to buy sufficient food, and I can no longer face the misery that I have endured for so many years. I prefer death a thousand times."

" And I," said Mr. Jarnville, " am a disappointed inventor. I have for years laboured upon the construction of a smoke-consumer, but now that it is done, I have not money enough to pay for a patent ; and I am starving. After trying everywhere to obtain assistance, I have resolved to give up the struggle and to find refuge in the grave."

Mr. Winden cleared his throat once or twice before beginning his story. He seemed to labour under some embarrassment. " The truth is," he said, " I was rejected last night by a young lady whom I love, and I made up my mind that life without her would not be worth having."

Nobody spoke for some time, and then Dr. O'Hagan said : " The balloon is falling, and, instead of throwing out ballast, I think it might be better, perhaps, to let it come down and to tie it to a tree, and make a fresh start with additional gas in the morning."

The other aeronauts gave their approval to this plan, and Dr. O'Hagan threw out the grapnel. It caught upon a tree top, and after some difficulty the balloon was brought down and tied fast, while the whole party stepped out of the car.

It was a wild and desolate place, but the four men soon started a fire, and while Mr. Winden and Mr. Jarnville prepared supper, Dr. O'Hagan and Mr. Crutter went to work to arrange some kind of shelter for Miss Dermott for the night.

After supper the five people gathered about the fire, and there really seemed to be a growth of cheerfulness in the party.

" I've been thinking," said Mr. Crutter, " what an outrageous

shame it is that this poor child here," pointing to Miss Dermott, "should actually be in want of food, while I have more money than I know what to do with. I'll tell you what, Miss Dermott, if you will agree to go back you can have my whole fortune. I've left it to an asylum, but I'll write a new will now, and tell you where you can find the other one, so as to tear it up."

"I don't want to go back," said Miss Dermott.

"I would if I were you," said Mr. Winden. "It's a shame for you to go upon such an awful journey as this. And I've been thinking, Mr. Jarnville, since you spoke about your smoke-consumer, that my father, who is a wealthy iron-mill owner, has offered a large reward for a perfect contrivance of that sort. If yours is a good one, he will help you to a fortune."

"I wish I had known that yesterday," said Mr. Jarnville.

"Yes," said Dr. O'Hagan, "and if I had known that Mr. Crutter here was being driven to suicide by dyspepsia, I could have helped him, for I have been very successful in treating that complaint. Let me examine you, Mr. Crutter. Yes," said the doctor, after expending a few moments looking at and talking to Mr. Crutter, "I feel certain I can cure you."

"I would have given you half my fortune yesterday for such an assurance," said Mr. Crutter. "But it is now too late."

"If I had met you then," said the Doctor, "I should not have been here now."

"Can't we all go back again?" asked Mr. Jarnville.

"Impossible!" said Dr. O'Hagan.

"I've got nothing to go back for," said Mr. Winden. "There is no remedy for my trouble, that I an perceive."

"There are other young ladies who could make good wives," said Mr. Crutter.

"Oh, I know, but——" said Mr. Winden hesitating, and looking furtively at Miss Dermott. Miss Dermott blushed.

"Suppose we rest for the night and sleep on the matter," said Dr. O'Hagan. "There's no use being in a hurry."

Miss Dermott retired to sleep beneath a shelter of boughs, where were strewn some pine and hemlock branches. Dr. O'Hagan covered her carefully with the blankets, and then the four men stretched themselves by the fire and fell asleep.

The conversation between the travellers must inevitably have had a good effect. The surest remedy for a morbid propensity to brood over our own troubles is to have our sympathy excited for the troubles of other people. After breakfast in the morning Mr. Crutter said:

"I have solemnly considered all that was said last night, and I have a proposition to make. Dr. O'Hagan, if you will return with Miss Dermott and Mr. Jarnville, you three may divide my fortune between you, and Mr. Winden can give a letter to his father to

Mr. Jarnville, about the smoke-consumer; and dear Mr. Winden and I will continue this journey together. How will that do?"

"I am willing to drop off and return," said Mr. Jarnville.

"I will go only on condition you will go also," said Dr. O'Hagan. "I will make you a well man if you agree."

"But," said Mr. Crutter, "it would be a shame to leave Winden here alone with this balloon. No; I have had enough of life. I'll proceed on the voyage."

"There is a good deal of force in what the Doctor says, though," remarked Mr. Winden.

"Why, you are not thinking about backing out, too, are you?" inquired Mr. Crutter.

"Well, I don't know," said Mr. Winden, looking half ashamed. "It seemed to me last night, when I got to thinking about it, that a woman's scorn is hardly worth a man's life, and I——"

"You're right!" said Mr. Crutter. "It isn't. Suppose we put the matter in this way: If Dr. O'Hagan cures me, I will pay him fifty thousand dollars in cash, and I will go into partnership with Mr. Jarnville in his invention. We can see your father about it, and you can return to him while I adopt Miss Dermott as my daughter!"

"I had thought," said Mr. Winden, "of a slightly different plan, but possibly it could not be carried out."

"What was that?" asked Dr. O'Hagan.

"Why," said Mr. Winden, "I thought, perhaps—But, no! there is no use of mentioning it."

"Out with it," said Mr. Crutter. "We want the opinions of all hands."

"I did think," said Mr. Winden, "that possibly Miss Dermott instead of becoming your daughter would consent to become my wife. Would you entertain such a proposition, Miss Dermott?"

Miss Dermott hung her head, and seemed to be covered with confusion. "I will think about it," she said.

"That means she will give her consent," said Mr. Crutter, smiling. "Let her come with me while she is thinking the matter over. Are you all agreed to my plan?" Everybody expressed assent to it, and everybody seemed very happy.

"Why, what is that?" suddenly exclaimed Miss Dermott, pointing to a distant object above them.

"I verily believe that is our balloon," said Dr. O'Hagan. "Yes, it is gone! it must have broken loose while we were at breakfast."

"Oh, well," said Mr. Crutter, "let it go! Who cares! I'll pay Captain Cowgill for his losses. And now let us see about getting home."

Mr. Winden and Mr. Jarnville started to hunt for a conveyance, and in about two hours they returned with one. The nearest railway station was thirteen miles away, but in two more hours the

party reached it, and while Mr. Crutter purchased tickets for the coming train, Dr. O'Hagan went into the telegraph office and sent the following despatch :—

" Captain W. A. Cowgill. Balloon escaped. Party all safe and perfectly happy. Will reach home to-morrow morning.

(*Signed*) HENRY O'HAGAN."

GEORGE ALFRED TOWNSEND

1841–1914

CRUTCH, THE PAGE

I. CHIPS

THE Honourable Jeems Bee, of Texas, sitting in his committee-room half an hour before the convening of Congress, waiting for his negro familiar to compound a julep, was suddenly confronted by a small boy on crutches.

"A letter!" exclaimed Mr. Bee, "with the frank of Reybold on it—that Yankeest of Pennsylvania Whigs! Yer's familiarity! Wants me to appoint one U—U—U, what?"

"Uriel Basil," said the small boy on crutches, with a clear, bold, but rather sensitive voice.

"Uriel Basil, a page in the House of Representatives, bein' an infirm, deservin' boy, willin' to work to support his mother. Infirm boy wants to be a page, on the recommendation of a Whig, to a Dimmycratic committee. I say, gen'lemen, what do you think of that, heigh?"

This last addressed to some other members of the committee, who had meantime entered.

"Infum boy will make a spry page," said the Hon. Box Izard, of Arkansaw.

"Harder to get infum page than the Speaker's eye," said the orator, Pontotoc Bibb, of Georgia.

"Harder to get both than a 'pintment in these crowded times on a opposition recommendation when all ole Virginny is yaw to be tuk care of," said Hon. Fitzchew Smy, of the Old Dominion.

The small boy standing up on crutches, with large hazel eyes swimming and wistful, so far from being cut down by these criticisms, stood straighter, and only his narrow little chest showed feeling as it breathed quickly under his brown jacket.

"I can run as fast as anybody," he said impetuously. "My sister says so. You try me!"

"Who's yo' sister, bub?"

"Joyce."

"Who's Joyce?"

"Joyce Basil—*Miss* Joyce Basil to you, gentlemen. My mother

keep boarders. Mr. Reybold boards there. I think it's hard, when a little boy from the South wants to work, that the only body to help him find it is a Northern man. Don't you ? "

" Good hit ! " cried Jeroboam Coffee, Esq., of Alabama. " That boy would run if he could ! "

" Gentlemen," said another member of the committee, the youthful abstractionist from South Carolina, who was reputed to be a great poet on the stump, the Hon. Lowndes Cleburn—" gentlemen, that boy puts the thing on its igeel merits and brings it home to us. I'll ju my juty in this issue. Abe, wha's my julep ? "

" Gentlemen," said the Chairman of the Committee, Jeems Bee, " it 'pears to me that there's a social p'int right here. Reybold, bein' the only Whig on the Lake and Bayou Committee, ought to have something if he sees fit to ask for it. That's courtesy ! We, of all men, gentlemen, can't afford to forget it."

" No, by durn ! " cried Fitzchew Smy.

" You're right, Bee ! " cried Box Izard. " You give it a constitutional set."

" Reybold," continued Jeems Bee, thus encouraged, " Reybold is (to speak out) no genius ! He never will rise to the summits of usefulness. He lacks the air, the swing, the *pose*, as the sculptors say ; he won't treat, but he'll lend a little money, provided he knows where you goin' with it. If he ain't open-hearted, he ain't precisely mean ! "

" You're right, Bee ! " (General expression.)

" Further on, it may be said that the framers of the gov'ment never intended *all* the patronage to go to one side. Mr. Jeff'son put *that* on the steelyard principle : the long beam here, the big weight of being in the minority there. Mr. Jackson only threw it considabul more on one side, but even he, gentlemen, didn't take the whole patronage from the Outs ; he always left 'em enough to keep up the courtesy of the thing, and we can't go behind *him*. Not and be true to our traditions. Do I put it right ? "

" Bee," said the youthful Lowndes Cleburn, extending his hand, " you put it with the lucidity and spirituality of Kulhoon himself ! "

" Thanks, Cleburn," said Bee ; " this is a compliment not likely to be forgotten, coming from you. Then it is agreed, as the Chayman of yo' Committee, that I accede to the request of Mr. Reybold, of Pennsylvania ? "

" Aye ! " from everybody.

" And now," said Mr. Bee, " as we wair all up late at the club last night, I propose we take a second julep, and as Reybold is coming in he will jine us."

" I won't give you a farthing ! " cried Reybold at the door, speaking to some one. " Chips, indeed ! What shall I give you money to gamble away for ? A gambling beggar is worse than an imposter ! No, sir ! Emphatically no ! "

"A dollar for four chips for brave old Beau!" said the other voice. "I've struck 'em all but you. By the State Arms! I've got rights in this distreek! Everybody pays toll to brave old Beau! Come down!"

The Northern Congressman retreated before this pertinacious mendicant into his committee-room, and his pesterer followed him closely, nothing abashed, even into the privileged cloisters of the committee. The Southern members enjoyed the situation.

"Chips, Right Honourable! Chips for old Beau. Nobody this ten-year has run as long as you. I've laid for you, and now I've fell on you. Judge Bee, the fust business befo' yo' committee this mornin' is a assessment for old Beau, who's 'way down! Rheumatiz, bettin' on the black, failure of remittances from Fauqueeah, and other casualties by wind an' flood, have put ole Beau away down. He's a institution of his country and must be sustained!"

The laughter was general and cordial among the Southerners, while the intruder pressed hard upon Mr. Reybold. He was a singular object; tall, grim, half-comical, with a leer of low familiarity in his eyes, but his waxed moustache of military proportions, his patch of goatee just above the chin, his elaborately oiled hair and flaming necktie set off his faded face with an odd gear of finery and impressiveness. His skin was that of an old *roué's*, patched up and chalked, but the features were those of a once handsome man of style and carriage.

He wore what appeared to be a cast-off spring overcoat, out of season and colour on this blustering winter day, a rich buff waistcoat of an embossed pattern, such as few persons would care to assume, save, perhaps, a gambler, negro-buyer, or fine "buck" barber. The assumption of a large and flashy pin stood in his frilled shirt-bosom. He wore watch-seals without the accompanying watch, and his pantaloons, though faded and threadbare, were once of a fine material and cut in a style of extravagant elegance, and they covered his long, shrunken, but aristocratic limbs, and were strapped beneath his boots to keep them shapely. The boots themselves had been once of varnished kid or fine calf, but they were cracked and cut, partly by use, partly for comfort; for it was plain that their wearer had the gout, by his aristocratic hobble upon a gold-mounted cane, which was not the least inconsistent garniture of mendicancy.

"Boys," said Fitzchew Smy, "I s'pose we better come down early. There's a shillin', Beau. If I had one more such constituent as you, I should resign or die premachorely!"

"There's a piece o' tobacker," said Jeems Bee languidly, "all I can afford, Beau, this mornin'. I went to a chicken-fight yesterday and lóst all my change."

"Mine," said Box Izard, "is a regulation pen-knife, contributed by the United States, with the regret, Beau, that I can't 'commodate

you with a pine coffin for you to git into and git away down lower than you ever been."

"Yaw's a dollar," said Pontotoc Bibb; "it'll do for me an' Lowndes Cleburn, who's a poet and genius, and never has no money. This buys me off, Beau, for a month."

The gorgeous old mendicant took them all grimly and leering, and then pounced upon the Northern man, assured by their twinkles and winks that the rest expected some sport.

"And now, Right Honourable from the banks of the Susquehanna, Colonel Reybold—you see, I got your name; I ben a layin' for you!—come down handsome for the Uncle and ornament of this capital and country. What's yore's?"

"Nothing," said Reybold in a quiet way. "I cannot give a man like you anything, even to get rid of him."

"You're mean," said the stylish beggar, winking to the rest. "You hate to put your hands down in yer pocket, mightily. I'd rather be ole Beau, and live on suppers at the faro banks, than love a dollar like you!"

"I'll make it a V for Beau," said Pontotoc Bibb, "if he gives him a rub on the raw like that another lick. Durn a mean man, Cleburn!"

"Come down, Northerner," pressed the incorrigible loafer again; "it don't become a Right Honourable to be so mean with old Beau."

The little boy on crutches, who had been looking at this scene in a state of suspense and interest for some time, here cried hotly:

"If you say Mr. Reybold is a mean man, you tell a story, you nasty beggar! He often gives things to me and Joyce, my sister. He's just got me work, which is the best thing to give; don't you think so, gentlemen?"

"Work," said Lowndes Cleburn, "is the best thing to give away, and the most onhandy thing to keep. I like play the best—Beau's kind o' play!"

"Yes," said Jeroboam Coffee; "I think I prefer to make the chips fly out of a table more than out of a log."

"I like to work!" cried the little boy, his hazel eyes shining, and his poor, narrow body beating with unconscious fervour, half suspended on his crutches, as if he were of that good descent and natural spirit which could assert itself without bashfulness in the presence of older people. "I like to work for my mother. If I was strong, like other little boys, I would make money for her, so that she shouldn't keep any boarders—except Mr. Reybold. Oh! she has to work a lot; but she's proud and won't tell anybody. All the money I get I mean to give her; but I wouldn't have it if I had to beg for it like that man!"

"O Beau," said Colonel Jeems Bee, "you've cotched it now! Reybold's even with you. Little Crutch has cooked your goose! Crutch is right eloquent when his wind will permit."

The fine old loafer looked at the boy, whom he had not previously noticed, and it was observed that the last shaft had hurt his pride. The boy returned his wounded look with a straight, undaunted, spirited glance, out of a child's nature. Mr Reybold was impressed with something in the attitude of the two, which made him forget his own interest in the controversy.

Beau answered with a tone of nearly tender pacification:

"Now, my little man; come, don't be hard on the old veteran! He's down, old Beau is, sence the time he owned his blooded pacer and dined with the *Corps Diplomatique*; Beau's down sence then; but don't call the old feller hard names. We take it back, don't we? we take *them* words back?"

"There's a angel somewhere," said Lowndes Cleburn, "even in a Washington bummer, which responds to a little chap on crutches with a clear voice. Whether the angel takes the side of the bummer or the little chap, is a p'int out of our jurisdiction. Abe, give Beau a julep. He seems to have been demoralised by little Crutch's last."

"Take them hard words back, Bub," whined the licensed mendicant, with either real or affected pain; "it's a p'int of honour I'm a-standin' on. Do, now, little Major!"

"I shan't!" cried the boy. "Go and work like me. You're big, and you called Mr. Reybold mean. Haven't you got a wife or little girl, or nobody to work for? You ought to work for yourself, anyhow. Oughtn't he, gentlemen?"

Reybold, who had slipped around by the little cripple and was holding him in a caressing way from behind, looked over to Beau and was even more impressed with that generally undaunted worthy's expression. It was that of acute and suffering sensibility, perhaps the effervescence of some little remaining pride, or it might have been a twinge of the gout. Beau looked at the little boy, suspended there with the weak back and the narrow chest, and that scintillant, sincere spirit beaming out with courage born in the stock he belonged to. Admiration, conciliation, and pain were in the ruined vagrants eyes. Reybold felt a sense of pity. He put his hand in his pocket and drew forth a dollar.

"Here, Beau," he said, "I'll make an exception. You seem to have some feeling. Don't mind the boy!"

In an instant the coin was flying from his hand through the air. The beggar, with a livid face and clinched cane, confronted the Congressman like a maniac.

"You bilk!" he cried. "You supper customer! I'll brain you! I had rather parted with my shoes at a dolly shop and gone gadding the hoof, without a doss to sleep on—a town pauper, done on the vag—than to have been made scurvy in the sight of that child and deserve his words of shame!"

He threw his head upon the table and burst into tears.

II. HASH

Mrs. Tryphonia Basil kept a boarding-house of the usual kind on Four-and-a-Half Street. Male clerks—there were no female clerks in the Government in 1854—to the number of half a dozen, two old bureau officers, an architect's assistant, Reybold, and certain temporary visitors made up the table. The landlady was the mistress; the slave was Joyce.

Joyce Basil was a fine-looking girl, who did not know it—a fact so astounding as to be fitly related only in fiction. She did not know it, because she had to work so hard for the boarders and her mother. Loving her mother with the whole of her affection, she had suffered all the pains and penalties of love from that repository. She was to-day upbraided for her want of coquetry and neatness; to-morrow, for proposing to desert her mother and elope with a person she had never thought of. The mainstay of the establishment, she was not aware of her usefulness. Accepting every complaint and outbreak as if she deserved it, the poor girl lived at the capital a beautiful scullion, an unsalaried domestic, and daily forwarded the food to the table, led in the chamber work, rose from bed unrested and retired with all her bones aching. But she was of a natural grace that hard work could not make awkward; work only gave her bodily power, brawn, and form. Though no more than seventeen years of age, she was a superb woman, her chest thrown forward, her back like the torso of a *Venus de Milo*, her head placed on the throat of a Minerva, and the nature of a child moulded in the form of a matron. Joyce Basil had black hair and eyes—very long, excessive hair, that in the mornings she tied up with haste so imperfectly that once Reybold had seen it drop like a cloud around her and nearly touched her feet. At that moment, seeing him, she blushed. He pleaded, for once, a Congressman's impudence, and without her objection wound that great crown of woman's glory around her head, and, as he did so, the perfection of her form and skin, and the overrunning health and height of the Virginia girl, struck him so thoroughly that he said:

"Miss Joyce, I don't wonder that Virginia is the mother of Presidents."

Between Reybold and Joyce there were already the delicate relations of a girl who did not know that she was a woman and a man who knew she was beautiful and worthy. He was a man vigilant over himself, and the poverty and menial estate of Joyce Basil were already insuperable obstacles to marrying her, but still he was attracted by her insensibility that he could ever have regarded her in the light of marriage. "Who was her father, the Judge?" he used to reflect. The Judge was a favourite topic with Mrs. Basil at the table.

"Mr. Reybold," she would say, "you commercial people of the Nawth can't hunt, I believe. Jedge Basil is now on the mountains

of Fawquear hunting the plova. His grandfather's estate is full of plova."

If, by chance, Reybold saw a look of care on Mrs. Basil's face, he inquired for the Judge, her husband, and found he was still shooting on the Occequan.

"Does he never come to Washington, Mrs. Basil?" asked Reybold one day, when his mind was very full of Joyce, the daughter.

"Not while Congress is in session," said Mrs. Basil. "It's a little too much of the *oi polloi* for the Judge. His family, you may not know, Mr. Reybold, air of the Basils of King George. They married into the Tayloze of Mount Snaffle. The Tayloze of Mount Snaffle have Ingin blood in their veins—the blood of Pokyhuntus. They dropped the name of Taylor, which had got to be common through a want of Ingin blood, and spelled it with a E. It used to be Taylor, but now it's Tayloze."

On another occasion, at sight of Joyce Basil cooking over the fire, against whose flame her moulded arms took momentary roses upon their ivory, Reybold said to himself: "Surely there is something above the common in the race of this girl." And he asked the question of Mrs. Basil:

"Madame, how was the Judge, your husband, at the last advices?"

"Hunting the snipe, Mr. Reybold. I suppose you do not have the snipe in the Nawth. It is the aristocratic fowl of the Old Dominion. Its bill is only shorter than its legs, and it will not brown at the fire, to perfection, unless upon a silver spit. Ah! when the Jedge and myself were young, before his land troubles overtook us, we went to the springs with our own silver and carriages, Mr. Reybold."

Looking up at Mrs. Basil, Reybold noticed a pallor and flush alternately, and she evaded his eye.

Once Mrs. Basil borrowed a hundred dollars from Reybold in advance of board, and the table suffered in consequence.

"The Judge," she had explained, "is short of taxes on his Fawquear lands. It's a desperate moment with him." Yet in two days the Judge was shooting blue-winged teal at the mouth of the Accotink, and his entire indifference to his family set Reybold to thinking whether the Virginia husband and father was anything more than a forgetful savage. The boarders, however, made very merry over the absent unknown. If the beefsteak was tough, threats were made to send for "the Judge," and let him try a tooth on it; if scant, it was suggested that the Judge might have paid a gunning visit to the premises and inspected the larder. The daughter of the house kept such an even temper, and was so obliging within the limitations of the establishment, that many a boarder went to his department without complaint, though with an appetite only partly satisfied. The boy, Uriel, also was the guardsman of the household, old-faced as if with the responsibility of taking care

of two woman. Indeed, the children of the landlady were so well behaved and prepossessing that, compared with Mrs. Basil's shabby *hauteur* and garrulity, the legend of the Judge seemed to require no other foundation than offspring of such good spirit and intonation.

Mrs. Tryphonia Basil was no respecter of persons. She kept boarders, she said, as a matter of society, and to lighten the load of the Judge. He had very little idea that she was making a mercantile matter of hospitality, but, as she feelingly remarked, " the old families are misplaced in such times as these yer, when the departments are filled with Dutch, Yankees, Crackers, Pore Whites, and other foreigners." Her manner was, at periods, insolent to Mr. Reybold, who seldom protested, out of regard to the daughter and the little Page ; he was a man of quite ordinary appearance, saying little, never making speeches or soliciting notice, and he accepted his fare and quarters with little or no complaint.

" Crutch," he said one day to the little boy, " did you ever see your father ? "

" No, I never saw him, Mr. Reybold, but I've had letters from him."

" Don't he ever come to see you when you are sick ? "

" No. He wanted to come once when my back was very sick, and I laid in bed weeks and weeks, sir, dreaming, oh ! such beautiful things. I thought mamma and sister and I were all with papa in that old home we are going to some day. He carried me up and down in his arms, and I felt such rest that I never knew anything like it, when I woke up, and my back began to ache again. I wouldn't let mamma send for him, though, because she said he was working for us all to make our fortunes, and get doctors for me, and clothes and school for dear Joyce. So I sent him my love, and told papa to work, and he and I would bring the family out all right."

" What did your papa seem like in that dream, my little boy ? "

" Oh ! sir, his forehead was bright as the sun. Sometimes I see him now when I am tired at night after running all day through Congress."

Reybold's eyes were full of tears as he listened to the boy, and, turning aside, he saw Joyce Basil weeping also.

" My dear girl," he said to her, looking up significantly, " I fear he will see his great Father very soon."

Reybold had few acquaintances, and he encouraged the landlady's daughter to go about with him when she could get a leisure hour or evening. Sometimes they took a seat at the theatre, more often at the old Ascension Church, and once they attended a President's reception. Joyce had the bearing of a well-bred lady, and the purity of thought of a child. She was noticed as if she had been a new and distinguished arrival in Washington.

" Ah ! Reybold," said Pontotoc Bibb, " I understand, ole feller,

what keeps you so quiet now. You've got a wife unbeknown to the Kemittee ! and a happy man I know you air."

It pleased Reybold to hear this, and deepened his interest in the landlady's family. His attention to her daughter stirred Mrs. Basil's pride and revolt together.

" My daughter, Colonel Reybold," she said, " is designed for the army. The Judge never writes to me but he says : ' Tryphonee, be careful that you impress upon my daughter the importance of the military profession. My mother, grandmother, and great-grandmother married into the army, and no girl of the Basil stock shall descend to civil life while I can keep the Fawquear estates.' "

" Madame," said the Congressman, " will you permit me to make the suggestion that your daughter is already a woman and needs a father's care if she is ever to receive it. I beseech you to impress this subject upon the Judge. His estates cannot be more precious to his heart if he is a man of honour ; nay, what is better than honour, his duty requires him to come to the side of these children, though he be ever so constrained by business or pleasure to attend to more worldly concerns."

" The Judge," exclaimed Mrs. Basil, much miffed, " is a man of hereditary ijees, Colonel Reybold. He is now in pursuit of the—ahem !—the Kinvas-back on his ancestral waters. If he should hear that you suggests a pacific life and the grovelling associations of the capital for him, he might call you out, sir ! "

Reybold said no more ; but one evening when Mrs. Basil was absent, called across the Potomac, as happened frequently, at the summons of the Judge—and on such occasions she generally requested a temporary loan or a slight advance of board—Reybold found Joyce Basil in the little parlour of the dwelling. She was alone and in tears, but the little boy Uriel slept before the chimney-fire on a rug, and his pale thin face, catching the glow of the burning wood, looked beautiful as Reybold addressed the young woman.

" Miss Joyce," he said, " our little brother works too hard. Is there never to be relief for him ? His poor, withered body, slung on those crutches for hours and hours, racing up the aisles of the House with stronger pages, is wearing him out. His ambition is very interesting to see, but his breath is growing shorter and his strength is frailer every week. Do you know what it will lead to ? "

" O my Lord ! " she said in the negrofied phrase natural to her latitude, " I wish it was no sin to wish him dead."

" Tell me, my friend," said Reybold, " can I do nothing to assist you both ? Let me understand you. Accept my sympathy and confidence. Where is Uriel's father ? What is this mystery ? "

She did not answer.

" It is for no idle curiosity that I ask," he continued. " I will appeal to him for his family, even at the risk of his resentment. Where is he ? "

"Oh, do not ask!" she exclaimed. "You want me to tell you only the truth. He is *there.*

She pointed to one of the old portraits in the room—a picture fairly painted by some provincial artist—and it revealed a handsome face, a little voluptuous, but aristocratic, the shoulders clad in a martial cloak, the neck in ruffles, and a diamond in the shirt bosom. Reybold studied it with all his mind.

"Then it is no fiction," he said, "that you have a living father, one answering to your mother's description. Where have I seen that face? Has some irreparable mistake, some miserable controversy, alienated him from his wife? Has he another family?"

She answered with spirit:

"No, sir. He is my father and my brother's only. But I can tell you no more."

"Joyce," he said, taking her hand, "this is not enough. I will not press you to betray any secret you may possess. Keep it. But of yourself I must know something more. You are almost a woman. You are beautiful."

At this he tightened his grasp, and it brought him closer to her side. She made a little struggle to draw away, but it pleased him to see that when the first modest opposition had been tried she sat quite happily, though trembling, with his arm around her.

"Joyce," he continued, "you have a double duty: one to your mother and this poor invalid, whose journey toward that Father's house not made with hands is swiftly hastening; another duty toward your nobler self—the future that is in you and your woman's heart. I tell you again that you are beautiful, and the slavery to which you are condemning yourself for ever is an offence against the Creator of such perfection. Do you know what it is to love?"

"I know what it is to feel kindness," she answered after a time of silence. "I ought to know no more. Your goodness is very dear to me. We never sleep, brother and I, but we say your name together, and ask God to bless you."

Reybold sought in vain to suppress a confession he had resisted. The contact of her form, her large dark eyes now fixed upon him in emotion, the birth of the conscious woman in the virgin and her affection still in the leashes of a slavish sacrifice, tempted him onward to the conquest.

"I am about to retire from Congress," he said. "It is no place for me in times so insubstantial. There is darkness and beggary ahead for all your Southern race. There is a crisis coming which will be followed by desolation. The generation to which your parents belong is doomed! I open my arms to you, dear girl, and offer you a home never yet gladdened by a wife. Accept it, and leave Washington with me and with your brother. I love you wholly."

A happy light shone in her face a moment. She was weary to the

bone with the day's work and had not the strength, if she had the will, to prevent the Congressman drawing her to his heart. Sobbing there, she spoke with bitter agony.

" Heaven bless you, dear Mr. Reybold, with a wife good enough to deserve you ! Blessings on your generous heart. But I cannot leave Washington. I love another here ! "

III. DUST

The Lake and Bayou Committee reaped the reward of a good action. Crutch, the page, as they all called Uriel Basil, affected the sensibility of the whole committee to the extent that profanity almost ceased there, and vulgarity became a crime in the presence of a child. Gentle words and wishes became the rule ; a glimmer of reverence and a thought of piety were not unknown in that little chamber.

" Dog my skin ! " said Jeems Bee, " if I ever made a 'pintment that give me sech satisfaction ! I feel as if I had sot a nigger free ! "

The youthful abstractionist, Lowndes Cleburn, expressed it even better. " Crutch," he said, " is like a angel reduced to his bones. Them air wings or pinions, that he might have flew off with, being a pair of crutches, keeps him here to tarry awhile in our service. But, gentlemen, he's not got long to stay. His crutches is growing too heavy for that expanding sperit. Some day we'll look up and miss him through our tears."

They gave him many a present ; they put a silver watch in his pocket and dressed him in a jacket with gilt buttons. He had a bouquet of flowers to take home every day to that marvellous sister of whom he spoke so often ; and there were times when the whole committee, seeing him drop off to sleep as he often did through frail and weary nature, sat silently watching lest he might be wakened before his rest was over. But no persuasion could take him off the floor of Congress. In that solemn old Hall of Representatives, under the semi-circle of grey columns, he darted with agility from noon to dusk, keeping speed upon his crutches with the healthiest of the pages, and racing into the document-room, and through the dark and narrow corridors of the old Capitol loft, where the House library was lost in twilight. Visitors looked with interest and sympathy at the narrow back and body of this invalid child, whose eyes were full of bright, beaming spirit. He sometimes nodded on the steps by the Speaker's chair ; and these spells of dreaminess and fatigue increased as his disease advanced upon his wasting system. Once he did not awaken at all until adjournment. The great Congress and audience passed out, and the little fellow still slept, with his head against the Clerk's desk, while all the other pages were grouped around him, and they finally bore him off to the committee-room in their arms, where, among the sympathetic watchers, was old

Beau. When Uriel opened his eyes the old mendicant was looking into them.

"Ah! little Major," he said, "poor Beau has been waiting for you to take those bad words back. Old Beau thought it was all bob with his little cove."

"Beau," said the boy, "I've had such a dream! I thought my dear father, who is working so hard to bring me home to him, had carried me out on the river in a boat. We sailed through the greenest marshes, among white lilies, where the wild ducks were tame as they can be. All the ducks were diving and diving, and they brought up long stalks of celery from the water and gave them to us. Father ate all his. But mine turned into lilies and grew up so high that I felt myself going with them, and the higher I went the more beautiful grew the birds. Oh! let me sleep and see if it will be so again."

The outcast raised his gold-headed cane and hobbled up and down the room with a laced handkerchief at his eyes.

"Great God!" he exclaimed, "another generation is going out, and here I stay without a stake, playing a lone hand for ever and for ever."

"Beau," said Reybold, "there's hope while one can feel. Don't go away until you have a good word from our little passenger."

The outstretched hand of the Northern Congressman was not refused by the vagrant, whose eccentric sorrow yet amused the Southern Committeemen.

"Ole Beau's jib-boom of a mustache 'll put his eye out," said Pontotoc Bibb, "ef he fetches another groan like that."

"Beau's very shaky around the hams an' knees," said Box Izard; "he's been a good figger, but even figgers can lie ef they stand up too long."

The little boy unclosed his eyes and looked around on all those kindly, watching faces.

"Did anybody fire a gun?" he said. "Oh! no. I was only dreaming that I was hunting with father, and he shot at the beautiful pheasants that were making such a whirring of wings for me. It was music. When can I hunt with father, dear gentlemen?"

They all felt the tread of the mighty hunter before the Lord very near at hand—the hunter whose name is Death.

"There are little tiny birds along the beach," muttered the boy. "They twitter and run into the surf and back again, and I am one of them! I must be, for I feel the water cold, and yet I see you all, so kind to me! Don't whistle for me now; for I don't get much play, gentlemen! Will the Speaker turn me out if I play with the beach birds just once? I'm only a little boy working for my mother."

"Dear Uriel," whispered Reybold, "here's Old Beau, to whom you once spoke angrily. Don't you see him?"

The little boy's eyes came back from far-land somewhere, and

he saw the ruined gamester at his feet.

"Dear Beau," he said, "I can't get off to go home with you. They won't excuse me, and I give all my money to mother. But you go to the back gate. Ask for Joyce. She'll give you a nice warm meal every day. Go with him, Mr. Reybold! If you ask for him it will be all right: for Joyce—dear Joyce!—she loves you."

The beach birds played again along the strand; the boy ran into the foam with his companions and felt the spray once more. The Mighty Hunter shot his bird—a little cripple that twittered the sweetest of them all. Nothing moved in the solemn chamber of the committee but the voice of an old forsaken man, sobbing bitterly.

IV. CAKE

The funeral was over, and Mr. Reybold marvelled much that the Judge had not put in an appearance. The whole committee had attended the obsequies of Crutch and acted as pall-bearers. Reybold had escorted the page's sister to the Congressional cemetry, and had observed even old Beau to come with a wreath of flowers and hobble to the grave and deposit them there. But the Judge, remorseless in death as frivolous in life, never came near his mourning wife and daughter in their severest sorrow. Mrs. Tryphonia Basil, seeing that this singular want of behaviour on the Judge's part was making some ado, raised her voice above the general din of meals.

"Jedge Basil," she exclaimed, "has been on his Tennessee purchase. These Christmas times there's no getting through the snow in the Cumberland Gap. He's stopped off thaw to shoot the—ahem!—the wild torkey—a great passion with the Jedge. His half-uncle, Gineral Johnson, of Awkinso, was a torkey-killer of high celebrity. He was a Deshay on his Maw's side. I s'pose you haven't the torkey in the Dutch country, Mr. Reybold?"

"Madame," said Reybold, in a quieter moment, "have you written to the Judge the fact of his son's death?"

"Oh yes—to Fawquear."

"Mrs. Basil," continued the Congressman, "I want you to be explicit with me. Where is the Judge, your husband, at this moment?"

"Excuse me, Colonel Reybold, this is a little of a assumption, sir. The Jedge might call you out, sir, for intruding upon his incog. He's very fine on his incog., you air awair."

"Madame," exclaimed Reybold straightforwardly, "there are reasons why I should communicate with your husband. My term in Congress is nearly expired. I might arouse your interest, if I chose, by recalling to your mind the memorandum of about seven hundred dollars in which you are my debtor. That would be a reason for seeing your husband anywhere north of the Potomac, but I do not

intend to mention it. Is he aware—are you?—that Joyce Basil is in love with some one in this city?"

Mrs. Basil drew a long breath, raised both hands, and ejaculated: "Well, I declaw!"

"I have it from her own lips," continued Reybold. "She told me as a secret, but all my suspicions are awakened. If I can prevent it, madame, that girl shall not follow the example of hundreds of her class in Washington, and descend, through the boarding-house or the lodging quarter, to be the wife of some common and unambitious clerk, whose penury she must some day sustain by her labour. I love her myself, but I will never take her until I know her heart to be free. Who is this lover of your daughter?"

An expression of agitation and cunning passed over Mrs. Basil's face. "Colonel Reybold," she whined, "I pity your blasted hopes. If I was a widow, they should be comfoted. Alas! my daughter is in love with one of the Fitzchews of Fawqueeah. His parents is cousins of the Jedge, and attached to the military."

The Congressman looked disappointed, but not yet satisfied.

"Give me at once the address of your husband," he spoke. "If you do not, I shall ask your daughter for it, and she cannot refuse me."

The mistress of the boarding-house was not without alarm, but she dispelled it with an outbreak of anger. "If my daughter disobeys her mother," she cried, "and betrays the Jedge's incog., she is no Basil, Colonel Reybold. The Basils repudiate her, and she may jine the Dutch and other foreigners at her pleasure."

"That is her only safety," exclaimed Reybold. "I hope to break every string that holds her to yonder barren honour and exhausted soil." He pointed toward Virginia, and hastened away to the Capitol. All the way up the squalid and muddy avenue of that day he mused and wondered: "Who is Fitzhugh? Is there such a person any more than a Judge Basil? And yet there *is* a Judge, for Joyce has told me so. *She*, at least, cannot lie to me. At last," he thought, "the dream of my happiness is over. Invincible in her prejudice as all these Virginians, Joyce Basil has made her bed among the starveling First Families, and there she means to live and die. Five years hence she will have her brood around her. In ten years she will keep a boarding-house and borrow money. As her daughters grow up to the stature and grace of their mother, they will be proud and poor again and breed in and out, until the race will perish from the earth."

Slow to love, deeply interested, baffled but unsatisfied, Reybold made up his mind to cut his perplexity short by leaving the city for the county of Fauquier. As he passed down the avenue late that afternoon, he turned into E street, near the theatre, to engage a carriage for his expedition. It was a street of livery stables, gambling dens, drinking houses, and worse; murders had been

committed along its sidewalks. The more pretentious *canaille* of the city harboured there to prey on the hotels close at hand and aspire to the chance acquaintance of gentlemen. As Reybold stood in an archway of this street, just as the evening shadows deepened above the line of sunset, he saw something pass which made his heart start to his throat and fastened him to the spot. Veiled and walking fast, as if escaping detection or pursuit, the figure of Joyce Basil flitted over the pavement and disappeared in a door about the middle of this Alsatian quarter of the capital.

"What house is that?" he asked of a constable passing by, pointing to the door she entered.

"Gambling den," answered the officer. "It used to be old Phil Pendleton's."

Reybold knew the reputation of the house: a resort for the scions of the old tidewater families, where hospitality thinly veiled the paramount design of plunder. The connection established the truth of Mrs. Basil's statement. Here, perhaps, already married to the dissipated heir of some unproductive estate, Joyce Basil's lot was cast for ever. It might even be that she had been tempted here by some wretch whose villainy she knew not of. Reybold's brain took fire at the thought, and he pursued the fugitive into the doorway. A negro steward unfastened a slide and peeped at Reybold knocking in the hall; and, seeing him of respectable appearance, bowed ceremoniously as he let down a chain and opened the door.

"Short cards in the front saloon," he said; "supper and faro back. Chambers on the third floor. Walk up."

Reybold only tarried a moment at the gaming tables, where the silent, monotonous deal from the tin box, the lazy stroke of the markers, and the transfer of ivory "chips" from card to card of the sweatcloth, impressed him as the dullest form of vice he had ever found. Treading softly up the stairs, he was attracted by the light of a door partly ajar, and a deep groan, as of a dying person. He peeped through the crack of the door and beheld Joyce Vasil leaning over an old man, whose brow she moistened with her handkerchief. "Dear father," he heard her say, and it brought consolation to more than the sick man. Reybold threw open the door and entered into the presence of Mrs. Basil and her daughter. The former arose with surprise and shame and cried:

"Jedge Basil, the Dutch have hunted you down. He's here—the Yankee creditor."

Joyce Basil held up her hand in imploration, but Reybold did not heed the woman's remark. He felt a weight rising from his heart, and the blindness of many months lifted from his eyes. The dying mortal upon the bed, over whose face the blue billow of death was rolling rapidly, and whose eyes sought in his daughter's the promise of mercy from on high, was the mysterious parent who had

never arrived—the Judge from Fauquier. In that old man's long waxed moustache, crimped hair, and threadbare finery the Congressman recognised old Beau, the outcast gamester and mendicant, and the father of Joyce and Uriel Basil.

" Colonel Reybold," faltered that old wreck of manly beauty and of promise long departed, " old Beau's passing in his checks. The chant coves will be telling to-morrow what they know of his life in the papers, but I've dropped a cold deck on 'em these twenty years. Not one knows old Beau, the Bloke, to be Tom Basil, cadet at West Point in the last generation. I've kept nothing of my own but my children's good names. My little boy never knew me to be his father. I tried to keep the secret from my daughter, but her affection broke down my disguises. Thank God ! the old rounder's deal has run out at last. For his wife he'll flash her diles no more, nor be taken on the vag."

" Basil," said Reybold, " what trust do you leave to me in your family ? "

Mrs. Basil strove to interpose, but the dying man raised his voice : " Tryphonee can go home to Fauquier. She was always welcome there—without me. I was disinherited. But here, Colonel ! My last drop of blood is in the girl. She loves you."

A rattle arose in the sinner's throat. He made an effort, and transferred his daughter's hand to the Congressman's. Not taking it away, she knelt with her future husband at the bedside and raised her voice :

" Lord, when Thou comest into Thy Kingdom, remember him ! "

AMBROSE BIERCE

1842–? 1914

THE MAN AND THE SNAKE

It is of veritabyll report, and attested of so many that there be nowe of wyse and learned none to gaynsaye it, that ye serpente hys eye hath a magnetick propertie that whosoe falleth into its svasion is drawn forwards in despyte of his wille, and perisheth miserabyll by ye creature hys byte.

I

STRETCHED at ease upon a sofa, in gown and slippers, Harker Brayton smiled as he read the foregoing sentence in old Morryster's *Marvells of Science*. "The only marvel in the matter," he said to himself, "is that the wise and learned in Morryster's day should have believed such nonsense as is rejected by most of even the ignorant in ours."

A train of reflections followed—for Brayton was a man of thought—and he unconsciously lowered his book without altering the direction of his eyes. As soon as the volume had gone below the line of sight, something in an obscure corner of the room recalled his attention to his surroundings. What he saw, in the shadow under his bed, were two small points of light, apparently about an inch apart. They might have been reflections of the gas jet above him, in metal nail heads; he gave them but little thought and resumed his reading. A moment later something—some impulse which it did not occur to him to analyse—impelled him to lower the book again and seek for what he saw before. The points of light were still there. They seemed to have become brighter than before shining with a greenish lustre which he had not at first observed. He thought, too, that they might have moved a trifle—were somewhat nearer. They were still too much in shadow, however, to reveal their nature and origin to an indolent attention, and he resumed his reading. Suddenly something in the text suggested a thought which made him start and drop the book for the third time to the side of the sofa, whence, escaping from his hand, it fell sprawling to the floor, back upward. Brayton, half risen, was staring intently into the obscurity beneath the bed, where the points of light shone with, it seemed to him, an added fire. His attention was now fully aroused, his gaze eager and imperative. It disclosed, almost directly beneath the foot-rail of

the bed, the coils of a large serpent—the points of light were its eyes! Its horrible head, thrust flatly forth from the innermost coil and resting upon the outermost, was directed straight toward him, the definition of the wide, brutal jaw and the idiot-like forehead serving to show the direction of its malevolent gaze. The eyes were no longer merely luminous points; they looked into his own with a meaning, a malign significance.

II

A snake in a bedroom of a modern city dwelling of the better sort is, happily, not so common a phenomenon as to make explanation altogether needless. Harker Brayton, a bachelor of thirty-five, a scholar, idler, and something of an athlete, rich, popular, and of sound health, had returned to San Francisco from all manner of remote and unfamiliar countries. His tastes, always a trifle luxurious, had taken on an added exuberance from long privation; and the resources of even the Castle Hotel being inadequate to their perfect gratification, he had gladly accepted the hospitality of his friend, Dr. Druring, the distinguished scientist. Dr. Druring's house, a large, old-fashioned one in what was now an obscure quarter of the city, had an outer and visible aspect of proud reserve. It plainly would not associate with the contiguous elements of its altered environment, and appeared to have developed some of the eccentricities which come of isolation. One of these was a "wing," conspicuously irrelevant in point of architecture, and no less rebellious in the matter of purpose; for it was a combination of laboratory, menagerie, and museum. It was here that the doctor indulged the scientific side of his nature in the study of such forms of animal life as engaged his interest and comforted his taste—which, it must be confessed, ran rather to the lower forms. For one of the higher types nimbly and sweetly to recommend itself unto his gentle senses, it had at least to retain certain rudimentary characteristics allying it to such "dragons of the prime" as toads and snakes. His scientific sympathies were distinctly reptilian; he loved nature's vulgarians and described himself as the Zola of zoology. His wife and daughters, not having the advantage to share his enlightened curiosity regarding the works and ways of our ill-starred fellow-creatures, were, with needless austerity, excluded from what he called the Snakery, and doomed to companionship with their own kind, though, to soften the rigours of their lot, he had permitted them, out of his great wealth, to outdo the reptiles in the gorgeousness of their surroundings and to shine with a superior splendour.

Architecturally, and in point of "furnishing," the Snakery had a severe simplicity befitting the humble circumstances of its occupants, many of whom, indeed, could not safely have been intrusted with the liberty which is necessary to the full enjoyment of luxury, for they

had the troublesome peculiarity of being alive. In their own apartments, however, they were under as little personal restraint as was compatible with their protection from the baneful habit, of swallowing one another; and, as Brayton had thoughtfully been apprised, it was more than a tradition that some of them had at divers times been found in parts of the premises where it would have embarrassed them to explain their presence. Despite the Snakery and its uncanny associations—to which, indeed, he gave little attention—Brayton found life at the Druring mansion very much to his mind.

III

Beyond a smart shock of surprise and a shudder of mere loathing, Mr. Brayton was not greatly affected. His first thought was to ring the call-bell and bring a servant; but, although the bell-cord dangled within easy reach, he made no movement toward it; it had occurred to his mind that the act might subject him to the suspicion of fear, which he certainly did not feel. He was more keenly conscious of the incongruous nature of the situation than affected by its perils; it was revolting, but absurd.

The reptile was of a species with which Brayton was unfamiliar. Its length he could only conjecture; the body at the largest visible part seemed about as thick as his forearm. In what way was it dangerous, if in any way? Was it venomous? Was it a constrictor? His knowledge of nature's danger signals did not enable him to say; he had never deciphered the code.

If not dangerous, the creature was at least offensive. It was *de trop*—"matter out of place"—an impertinence. The gem was unworthy of the setting. Even the barbarous taste of our time and country, which had loaded the walls of the room with pictures, the floor with furniture, and the furniture with bric-à-brac, had not quite fitted the place for this bit of the savage life of the jungle. Besides—insupportable thought!—the exhalations of its breath mingled with the atmosphere which he himself was breathing!

These thoughts shaped themselves with greater or less definition in Brayton's mind and begot action. The process is what we call consideration and decision. It is thus that we are wise and unwise. it is thus that the withered leaf in an autumn breeze shows greater or less intelligence than its fellows, falling upon the land or upon the lake. The secret of human action is an open one: something contracts our muscles. Does it matter if we give to the preparatory molecular changes the name of will?

Brayton rose to his feet and prepared to back softly away from the snake, without disturbing it, if possible, and through the door People retire so from the presence of the great, for greatness is power, and power is a menace. He knew that he could walk backward without obstruction, and find the door without error. Should

the monster follow, the taste which had plastered the walls with paintings had consistently supplied a rack of murderous Oriental weapons from which he could snatch one to suit the occasion. In the meantime the snake's eyes burned with a more pitiless malevolence than ever.

Brayton lifted his right foot free of the floor to step backward. That moment he felt a strong aversion to doing so.

"I am accounted brave," he murmured; "is bravery, then, no more than pride? Because there are none to witness the shame shall I retreat?" He was steadying himself with his right hand upon the back of the chair, his foot suspended.

"Nonsense!" he said aloud; "I am not so great a coward as to fear to seem to myself afraid."

He lifted the foot a little higher by slightly bending the knee, and thrust it sharply to the floor—an inch in front of the other! He could not think how that occurred. A trial with the left foot had the same result; it was again in advance of the right. The hand upon the chair back was grasping it; the arm was straight, reaching somewhat backward. One might have seen that he was reluctant to lose his hold. The snake's malignant head was still thrust forth from the inner coil as before, the neck level. It had not moved, but its eyes were now electric sparks, radiating an infinity of luminous needles.

The man had an ashy pallor. Again he took a step forward, and another, partly dragging the chair, which, when finally released, fell upon the floor with a crash. The man groaned; the snake made neither sound nor motion, but its eyes were two dazzling suns. The reptile itself was wholly concealed by them. They gave off enlarging rings of rich and vivid colours, which at their greatest expansion successively vanished like soap bubbles; they seemed to approach his very face, and anon were an immeasurable distance away. He heard, somewhere, the continuous throbbing of a great drum, with desultory bursts of far music, inconceivably sweet, like the tones of an æolian harp. He knew it for the sunrise melody of Memnon's statue, and thought he stood in the Nileside reeds, hearing, with exalted sense, that immortal anthem through the silence of the centuries.

The music ceased; rather, it became by insensible degrees the distant roll of a retreating thunderstorm. A landscape, glittering with sun and rain, stretched before him, arched with a vivid rainbow, framing in its giant curve a hundred visible cities. In the middle distance a vast serpent, wearing a crown, reared its head out of its voluminous convolutions and looked at him with his dead mother's eyes. Suddenly this enchanting landscape seemed to rise swiftly upward like the drop-scene at a theatre, and vanished in a blank. Something struck him a hard blow upon the face and breast. He had fallen to the floor; the blood ran from his broken

nose and his bruised lips. For a moment he was dazed and stunned, and lay with closed eyes, his face against the floor. In a few moments he had recovered, and then realised that his fall, by withdrawing his eyes, had broken the spell which held him. He felt that now, by keeping his gaze averted, he would be able to retreat. But the thought of the serpent within a few feet of his head, yet unseen—perhaps in the very act of springing upon him and throwing its coils about his throat—was too horrible. He lifted his head, stared again into those baleful eyes, and was again in bondage.

The snake had not moved, and appeared somewhat to have lost its power upon the imagination; the gorgeous illusions of a few moments before were not repeated. Beneath that flat and brainless brow its black, beady eyes simply glittered, as at first, with an expression unspeakably malignant. It was as if the creature, knowing its triumph assured, had determined to practise no more alluring wiles.

Now ensued a fearful scene. The man, prone upon the floor, within a yard of his enemy raised the upper part of his body upon his elbows, his head thrown back, his legs extended to their full length. His face was white between its gouts of blood; his eyes were strained open to their uttermost expansion. There was froth upon his lips; it dropped off in flakes. Strong convulsions ran through his body, making almost serpentine undulations. He bent himself at the waist, shifting his legs from side to side. And every movement left him a little nearer to the snake. He thrust his hands forward to brace himself back, yet constantly advanced upon his elbows.

IV

Dr. Druring and his wife sat in the library. The scientist was in rare good humour. "I have just obtained, by exchange with another collector," he said, "a splendid specimen of the *ophiophagus*."

"And what may that be?" the lady inquired with a somewhat languid interest.

"Why, bless my soul, what profound ignorance! My dear, a man who ascertains after marriage that his wife does not know Greek, is entitled to a divorce. The *ophiophagus* is a snake which eats other snakes."

"I hope it will eat all yours," she said, absently shifting the lamp. "But how does it get the other snakes? By charming them, I suppose."

"That is just like you, dear," said the doctor, with an affection of petulance. "You know how irritating to me is any allusion to that vulgar supersititon about the snake's power of fascination."

The conversation was interrupted by a mighty cry, which rang through the silent house like the voice of a demon shouting in a tomb! Again and yet again it sounded, with terrible distinctness. They sprang to their feet, the man confused, the lady pale and

speechless with fright. Almost before the echoes of the last cry had died away, the doctor was out of the room, springing up the staircase two steps at a time. In the corridor, in front of Brayton's chamber, he met some servants who had come from the upper floor. Together they rushed at the door without knocking. It was unfastened and gave way. Brayton lay upon his stomach on the floor dead. His head and arms were partly concealed under the foot-rail of the bed. They pulled the body away, turning it upon the back. The face was daubed with blood and froth, the eyes were wide open, staring—a dreadful sight!

"Died in a fit," said the scientist, bending his knee and placing his hand upon the heart. While in that position, he happened to glance under the bed. "Good God!" he added, "how did this thing get in here?" He reached under the bed, pulled out the snake, and flung it, still coiled, to the centre of the room, whence, with a harsh, shuffling sound, it slid across the polished floor till stopped by the wall, where it lay without motion. It was a stuffed snake; its eyes were two shoe buttons.

THE DAMNED THING

AMBROSE BIERCE

I

BY the light of a tallow candle, which had been placed on one end of a rough table, a man was reading something written in a book. It was an old account book, greatly worn; and the writing was not, apparently, very legible, for the man sometimes held the page close to the flame of the candle to get a stronger light upon it. The shadow of the book would then throw into obscurity a half of the room, darkening a number of faces and figures; for besides the reader, eight other men were present. Seven of them sat against the rough log walls, silent and motionless, and, the room being small, not very far from the table. By extending an arm any one of them could have touched the eighth man, who lay on the table, face upward, partly covered by a sheet, his arms at his sides. He was dead.

The man with the book was not reading aloud, and no one spoke; all seemed to be waiting for something to occur; the dead man only was without expectation. From the blank darkness outside came in, through the aperture that served for a window, all the ever unfamiliar noises of night in the wilderness—the long, nameless

note of a distant coyote ; the stilly pulsing thrill of tireless insects in the trees ; strange cries of night birds, so different from those of the birds of day ; the drone of great blundering beetles and all that mysterious chorus of small sounds that seemed always to have been but half heard when they have suddenly ceased, as if conscious of an indiscretion. But nothing of all this was noted in that company ; its members were not overmuch addicted to idle interest in matters of no practical importance ; that was obvious in every line of their rugged faces—obvious even in the dim light of the single candle. They were evidently men of the vicinity—farmers and woodmen.

The person reading was a trifle different ; one would have said of him that he was of the world, worldly, albeit there was that in his attire which attested a certain fellowship with the organisms of his environment. His coat would hardly have passed muster in San Francisco : his footgear was not of urban origin, and the hat that lay by him on the floor (he was the only one uncovered) was such that if one had considered it as an article of mere personal adornment he would have missed its meaning. In countenance the man was rather prepossessing, with just a hint of sternness ; though that he may have assumed or cultivated, as appropriate to one in authority. For he was a coroner. It was by virtue of his office that he had possession of the book in which he was reading ; it had been found among the dead man's effects—in his cabin, where the inquest was now taking place.

When the coroner had finished reading he put the book into his breast pocket. At that moment the door was pushed open and a young man entered. He, clearly, was not of mountain birth and breeding : he was clad as those who dwell in cities. His clothing was dusty, however, as from travel. He had, in fact, been riding hard to attend the inquest.

The coroner nodded ; no one else greeted him.

" We have waited for you," said the coroner. " It is necessary to have done with this business to-night."

The young man smiled. " I am sorry to have kept you," he said, " I went away, not to evade your summons, but to post to my newspaper an account of what I suppose I am called back to relate."

The coroner smiled.

" The account that you posted to your newspaper," he said, " differs probably from that which you will give here under oath."

" That," replied the other, rather hotly and with a visible flush, " is as you choose. I used manifold paper and have a copy of what I sent. It was not written as news, for it is incredible, but as fiction. It may go as a part of my testimony under oath."

" But you say it is incredible."

" That is nothing to you, sir, if I also swear that it is true."

The coroner was apparently not greatly affected by the young man's manifest resentment. He was silent for some moments, his

eyes upon the floor. The men about the sides of the cabin talked in whispers, but seldom withdrew their gaze from the face of the corpse. Presently the coroner lifted his eyes and said: "We will resume the inquest."

The men removed their hats. The witness was sworn.

"What is your name?" the coroner asked.

"William Harker."

"Age?"

"Twenty-seven."

"You knew the deceased, Hugh Morgan?"

"Yes."

"You were with him when he died?"

"Near him."

"How did that happen—your presence, I mean?"

"I was visiting him at his place to shoot and fish. A part of my purpose, however, was to study him, and his odd, solitary way of life. He seemed a good model for a character in fiction. I sometimes write stories."

"I sometimes read them."

"Thank you."

"Stories in general—not yours."

Some of the jurors laughed. Against a sombre background humour shows high lights. Soldiers in the intervals of battle laugh easily, and a jest in the death chamber conquers by surprise.

"Relate the circumstances of this man's death," said the coroner. "You may use any notes or memoranda that you please."

The witness understood. Pulling a manuscript from his breast pocket he held it near the candle, and turning the leaves until he found the passage that he wanted, began to read.

II

"... The sun had hardly risen when we left the house. We were looking for quail, each with a shot-gun, but we had only one dog. Morgan said that our best ground was beyond a certain ridge that he pointed out, and we crossed it by trail through the *chaparral*. On the other side was comparatively level ground, thickly covered with wild oats. As we emerged from the *chaparral*, Morgan was but a few yards in advance. Suddenly, we heard, at a little distance to our right, and partly in front, a noise as of some animal thrashing about in the bushes, which we could see were violently agitated.

"'We've started a deer,' I said. 'I wish we had brought a rifle.'

"Morgan, who had stopped and was intently watching the agitated *chaparral*, said nothing, but had cocked both barrels of his gun, and was holding it in readiness to aim. I thought him a trifle excited, which surprised me, for he had a reputation for exceptional coolness, even in moments of sudden and imminent peril.

"'O, come!' I said. 'You are not going to fill up a deer with quail-shot, are you?'"

"Still he did not reply; but, catching a sight of his face as he turned it slightly toward me, I was struck by the pallor of it. Then I understood that we had serious business on hand, and my first conjecture was that we had 'jumped' a grizzly. I advanced to Morgan's side, cocking my piece as I moved.

"The bushes were now quiet, and the sounds had ceased, but Morgan was as attentive to the place as before.

"'What is it? What the devil is it?' I asked.

"'That Damned Thing!' he replied, without turning his head. His voice was husky and unnatural. He trembled visibly.

"I was about to speak further, when I observed the wild oats near the place of the disturbance moving in the most inexplicable way. I can hardly describe it. It seemed as if stirred by a streak of wind, which not only bent it, but pressed it down—crushed it so that it did not rise, and this movement was slowly prolonging itself directly toward us.

"Nothing that I had ever seen had affected me so strangely as this unfamiliar and unaccountable phenomenon, yet I am unable to recall any sense of fear. I remember—and tell it here because, singularly enough, I recollected it then—that once, in looking carelessly out of an open window, I momentarily mistook a small tree close at hand for one of a group of larger trees at a little distance away. It looked the same size as the others, but, being more distinctly and sharply defined in mass and details, seemed out of harmony with them. It was a mere falsification of the law of aerial perspective, but it startled, almost terrified me. We so rely upon the orderly operation of familar natural laws that any seeming suspension of them is noted as a menace to our safety, a warning of unthinkable calamity. So now the apparently causeless movement of the herbage, and the slow, undeviating approach of the line of disturbance were distinctly disquieting. My companion appeared actually frightened, and I could hardly credit my senses when I saw him suddenly throw his gun to his shoulders and fire both barrels at the agitated grass! Before the smoke of the discharge had cleared away I heard a loud savage cry—a scream like that of a wild animal—and, flinging his gun upon the ground, Morgan sprang away and ran swiftly from the spot. At the same instant I was thrown violently to the ground by the impact of something unseen in the smoke—some soft, heavy substance that seemed thrown against me with great force.

"Before I could get upon my feet and recover my gun, which seemed to have been struck from my hands, I heard Morgan crying out as if in mortal agony, and mingling with his cries were such hoarse, savage sounds as one hears from fighting dogs. Inexpressibly terrified, I struggled to my feet and looked in the direction

of Morgan's retreat ; and may heaven in mercy spare me from another sight like that ! At a distance of less than thirty yards was my friend, down upon one knee, his head thrown back at a frightful angle, hatless, his long hair in disorder and his whole body in violent movement from side to side, backward and forward. His right arm was lifted and seemed to lack the hand—at least, I could see none. The other arm was invisible. At times, as my memory now reports this extraordinary scene, I could discern but a part of his body ; it was as if he had been partly blotted out—I can not otherwise express it—then a shifting of his position would bring it all into view again.

" All this must have occurred within a few seconds, yet in that time Morgan assumed all the postures of a determined wrestler vanquished by superior weight and strength. I saw nothing but him, and him not always distinctly. During the entire incident his shouts and curses were heard, as if through an enveloping uproar of such sounds of rage and fury as I had never heard from the throat of man or brute !

" For a moment only I stood irresolute, then throwing down my gun, I ran forward to my friend's assistance. I had a vague belief that he was suffering from a fit or some form of convulsion. Before I could reach his side he was down and quiet. All sounds had ceased, but, with a feeling of such terror as even these awful events had not inspired, I now saw the same mysterious movement of the wild oats prolonging itself from the trampled area about the prostrate man toward the edge of a wood. It was only when it had reached the wood that I was able to withdraw my eyes and look at my companion. He was dead."

III

The coroner rose from his seat and stood beside the dead man. Lifting an edge of the sheet he pulled it away, exposing the entire body, altogether naked and showing in the candle-light a clay-like yellow. It had, however, broad maculations of bluish-black, obviously caused by extravasated blood from contusions. The chest and sides looked as if they had been beaten with a bludgeon. There were dreadful lacerations ; the skin was torn in strips and shreds.

The coroner moved round to the end of the table and undid a silk handkerchief, which had been passed under the chin and knotted on the top of the head. When the handkerchief was drawn away it exposed what had been the throat. Some of the jurors who had risen to get a better view repented their curiosity, and turned away their faces. Witness Harker went to the open window and leaned out across the sill, faint and sick. Dropping the handkerchief upon the dead man's neck, the coroner stepped to an angle of the room, and from a pile of clothing produced one garment after another, each of which he held up a moment for inspection. All

were torn, and stiff with blood. The jurors did not make a closer inspection. They seemed rather uninterested. They had, in truth, seen all this before; the only thing that was new to them being Harker's testimony.

"Gentlemen," the coroner said, "we have no more evidence, I think. Your duty has been already explained to you; if there is nothing you wish to ask you may go outside and consider your verdict."

The foreman rose—a tall, bearded man of sixty, coarsely clad.

"I should like to ask one question, Mr. Coroner," he said. "What asylum did this yer last witness escape from?"

"Mr. Harker," said the coroner, gravely and tranquilly, "from what asylum did you last escape?"

Harker flushed crimson again, but said nothing, and the seven jurors rose and solemnly filed out of the cabin.

"If you have done insulting me, sir," said Harker, as soon as he and the officer were left alone with the dead man, "I suppose I am at liberty to go?"

"Yes."

Harker started to leave, but paused, with his hand on the door latch. The habit of his profession was strong in him—stronger than his sense of personal dignity. He turned about and said:

"The book that you have there—I recognise it as Morgan's diary. You seemed greatly interested in it; you read in it while I was testifying. May I see it? The public would like——"

"The book will cut no figure in this matter," replied the official, slipping it into his coat pocket; "all the entries in it were made before the writer's death."

As Harker passed out of the house the jury re-entered and stood about the table, on which the now covered corpse showed under the sheet with sharp definition. The foreman seated himself near the candle, produced from his breast pocket a pencil and scrap of paper, and wrote rather laboriously the following verdict, which with various degrees of effort all signed:

"We, the jury, do find that the remains come to their death at the hands of a mountain lion, but some of us thinks, all the same, they had fits."

IV

In the dairy of the late Hugh Morgan are certain interesting entries having, possibly, a scientific value as suggestions. At the inquest upon his body the book was not put in evidence; possibly the coroner thought it not worth while to confuse the jury. The date of the first of the entries mentioned cannot be ascertained; the upper part of the leaf is torn away; the part of the entry remaining is as follows:

". . . would run in a half circle, keeping his head turned

always toward the centre and again he would stand still, barking furiously. At last he ran away into the brush as fast as he could go. I thought at first that he had gone mad, but on returning to the house found no other alteration in his manner than what was obviously due to fear of punishment.

" Can a dog see with his nose ? Do odours impress some olfactory centre with images of the thing emitting them ? . . .

" Sept. 2.—Looking at the stars last night as they rose above the crest of the ridge east of the house, I observed them successively disappear—from left to right. Each was eclipsed but an instant, and only a few at the same time, but along the entire length of the ridge all that were within a degree or two of the crest were blotted out. It was as if something had passed along between me and them ; but I could not see it, and the stars were not thick enough to define its outline. Ugh ! I don't like this. . . ."

Several weeks' entries are missing, three leaves being torn from the book.

" Sept. 27.—It has been about here again—I find evidences of its presence every day. I watched again all of last night in the same cover, gun in hand, double-charged with buckshot. In the morning the fresh footprints were there, as before. Yet I would have sworn that I did not sleep—indeed, I hardly sleep at all. It is terrible, insupportable ! If these amazing experiences are real I shall go mad ; if they are fanciful I am mad already.

" Oct. 3.—I shall not go—it shall not drive me away. No, this is *my* house, *my* land. God hates a coward. . . .

" Oct. 5.—I can stand it no longer ; I have invited Harker to pass a few weeks with me—he has a level head. I can judge from his manner if he thinks me mad.

" Oct. 7.—I have the solution of the problem ; it came to me last night—suddenly, as by revelation. How simple—how terribly simple !

" There are sounds that we cannot hear. At either end of the scale are notes that stir no chord of that imperfect instrument, the human ear. They are too high or too grave. I have observed a flock of blackbirds occupying an entire tree-top—the tops of several trees —and all in full song. Suddenly—in a moment—at absolutely the same instant—all spring into the air and fly away. How ? They could not all see one another—whole tree-tops intervened. At no point could a leader have been visible to all. There must have been a signal of warning or command, high and shrill above the din, but by me unheard. I have observed, too, the same simultaneous flight when all were silent, among not only blackbirds, but other birds—quail, for example, widely separated by bushes—even on opposite sides of a hill.

" It is known to seamen that a school of whales basking or sporting on the surface of the ocean, miles apart, with the convexity of the

earth between them, will sometimes dive at the same instant—all gone out of sight in a moment. The signal has been sounded—too grave for the ear of the sailor at the masthead and his comrades on the deck—who nevertheless feel its vibrations in the ship as the stones of a cathedral are stirred by the bass of the organ.

"As with sounds, so with colours. At each end of the solar spectrum the chemist can detect the presence of what are known as 'actinic' rays. They represent colours—integral colours in the composition of light—which we are unable to discern. The human eye is an imperfect instrument; its range is but a few octaves of the real 'chromatic scale.' I am not mad; there are colours that we cannot see.

"And, God help me! the Damned Thing is of such a colour!"

MY FAVOURITE MURDER

AMBROSE BIERCE

HAVING murdered my mother under circumstances of singular atrocity, I was arrested and put upon trial, which lasted seven years. In summing up, the judge of the Court of Acquittal remarked that it was one of the most ghastly crimes that he had ever been called upon to explain away.

At this my counsel rose and said:

"May it please your honour, crimes are ghastly or agreeable only by comparison. If you were familiar with the details of my client's previous murder of his uncle, you would discern in his later offence something in the nature of tender forbearance and filial consideration for the feelings of the victim. The appalling ferocity of the former assassination was indeed inconsistent with any hypothesis but that of guilt; and had it not been for the fact that the honourable judge before whom he was tried was the president of a life insurance company which took risks on hanging, and in which my client held a policy, it is impossible to see how he could have been decently acquitted. If your honour would like to hear about it for the instruction and guidance of your honour's mind, this unfortunate man, my client, will consent to give himself the pain of relating it under oath."

The district attorney said: "Your honour, I object. Such a statement would be in the nature of evidence, and the testimony in this case is closed. The prisoner's statement should have been introduced three years ago, in the spring of 1881."

" In a statutory sense," said the judge, " you are right, and in the Court of Objections and Technicalities you would get a ruling in your favour. But not in a Court of Acquittal. The objection is overruled."

" I except," said the district attorney.

" You cannot do that," the judge said. " I must remind you that in order to take an exception you must first get this case transferred for a time to the Court of Exceptions upon a formal motion duly supported by affidavits. A motion to that effect by your predecessor in office was denied by me during the first year of this trial.

" Mr. Clerk, swear the prisoner."

The customary oath having been administered, I made the following statement, which impressed the judge with so strong a sense of the comparative triviality of the offence for which I was on trial that he made no further search for mitigating circumstances, but simply instructed the jury to acquit, and I left the court without a stain upon my reputation :

" I was born in 1856 in Kalamakee, Mich., of honest and reputable parents, one of whom Heaven has mercifully spared to comfort me in my later years. In 1867 the family came to California and settled near Nigger Head, where my father opened a road agency and prospered beyond the dreams of avarice. He was a silent, saturnine man then, though his increasing years have now somewhat relaxed the austerity of his disposition, and I believe that nothing but his memory of the sad event for which I am now on trial prevents him from manifesting a genuine hilarity.

" Four years after we had set up the road agency an itinerant preacher came along, and having no other way to pay for the night's lodging which we gave him, favoured us with an exhortation of such power that, praise God, we were all converted to religion. My father at once sent for his brother, the Hon. William Ridley of Stockton, and on his arrival turned over the agency to him, charging him nothing for the franchise or plant—the latter consisting of a Winchester rifle, a sawn-off shot gun and an assortment of masks made out of flour sacks. The family then moved to Ghost Rock and opened a dance house. It was called ' The Saints' Rest Hurdy-Gurdy,' and the proceedings each night began with a prayer. It was there that my now sainted mother, by her grace in the dance, acquired the sobriquet of ' The Bucking Walrus.'

" In the fall of '75 I had occasion to visit Coyote, on the road to Mahala, and took the stage at Ghost Rock. There were four other passengers. About three miles beyond Nigger Head, persons whom I identified as my Uncle William and his two sons, held up the stage. Finding nothing in the express box, they went through the passengers. I acted a most honourable part in the affair, placing myself in line with the others, holding up my hands and permitting myself to be deprived of forty dollars and a gold watch. From my be-

haviour no one could have suspected that I knew the gentlemen who gave the entertainment. A few days later, when I went to Nigger Head and asked for the return of my money and watch, my uncle and cousins swore they knew nothing of the matter, and they affected a belief that my father and I had done the job ourselves in dishonest violation of commercial good faith. Uncle William even threatened to retaliate by starting an opposition dance house at Ghost Rock. As 'The Saints' Rest' had become rather unpopular, I saw that this would assuredly ruin it and prove a paying enterprise, so I told my uncle that I was willing to overlook the past if he would take me into the scheme and keep the partnership a secret from my father. This fair offer he rejected, and I then perceived that it would be better and more satisfactory if he were dead.

" My plans to that end were soon perfected, and communicating them to my dear parents, I had the gratification of receiving their approval. My father said he was proud of me, and my mother promised that, although her religion forbade her to assist in taking human life, I should have the advantage of her prayers for my success. As a preliminary measure, looking to my security in case of detection, I made an application for membership in that powerful order, the Knights of Murder, and in due course was received as a member of the Ghost Rock Commandery. On the day that my probation ended I was for the first time permitted to inspect the records of the order and learn who belonged to it—all the rites of initiation having been conducted in masks. Fancy my delight, when, in looking over the roll of membership, I found the third name to be that of my uncle, who indeed was junior vice-chancellor of the order ! Here was an opportunity exceeding my wildest dreams—to murder I could add insubordination and treachery. It was what my good mother would have called ' a special Providence.'

" At about this time something occurred which caused my cup of joy, already full, to overflow on all sides, a circular cataract of bliss. Three men, strangers in that locality, were arrested for the stage robbery in which I had lost my money and watch. They were brought to trial and, despite my efforts to clear them and fasten the guilt upon three of the most respectable and worthy citizens of Ghost Rock, convicted on the clearest proof. The murder would now be as wanton and reasonless as I could wish.

" One morning I shouldered my Winchester rifle and, going over to my uncle's house, near Nigger Head, asked my Aunt Mary, his wife, if he were at home, adding that I had come to kill him. My aunt replied with a peculiar smile that so many gentlemen called on the same errand and were afterward carried away without having performed it that I must excuse her for doubting my good faith in the matter. She said it did not look as if I would kill anybody, so, as a guarantee of good faith, I levelled my rifle and wounded a Chinaman who happened to be passing the house. She said she

knew whole families who could do a thing of that kind, but Bill Ridley was a horse of another colour. She said, however, that I would find him over on the other side of the creek in the sheep lot; and she added that she hoped the best man would win.

"My Aunt Mary was one of the most fair-minded women whom I have ever met.

"I found my uncle down on his knees engaged in skinning a sheep. Seeing that he had neither gun nor pistol handy, I had not the heart to shoot him, so I approached him, greeted him pleasantly, and struck him a powerful blow on the head with the butt of my rifle. I have a very good delivery, and Uncle William lay down on his side, then rolled over on his back, spread out his fingers, and shivered. Before he could recover the use of his limbs I seized the knife that he had been using and cut his ham strings. You know, doubtless, that when you sever the tendon Achillis the patient has no further use of his leg; it is just the same as if he had no leg. Well, I parted them both, and when he revived he was at my service. As soon as he comprehended the situation, he said:

"'Samuel, you have got the drop on me, and can afford to be liberal about this thing. I have only one thing to ask of you, and that is that you carry me to the house and finish me in the bosom of my family.'

"I told him I thought that a pretty reasonable request, and I would do so if he would let me put him in a wheat sack; he would be easier to carry that way, and if we were seen by the neighbours en route it would cause less remark. He agreed to that, and, going to the barn, I got a sack. This, however, did not fit him; it was too short and much wider than he was; so I bent his legs, forced his knees up against his breast, and got him into it that way, tying the sack above his head. He was a heavy man, and I had all I could do to get him on my back, but I staggered along for some distance until I came to a swing which some of the children had suspended to the branch of an oak. Here I had laid him down and sat upon him to rest, and the sight of the rope gave me a happy inspiration. In twenty minutes my uncle, still in the sack, swung free to the sport of the wind. I had taken down the rope, tied one end tightly about the mouth of the bag, thrown the other across the limb, and hauled him up about five feet from the ground. Fastening the other end of the rope also to the mouth of the sack, I had the satisfaction to see my uncle converted into a huge pendulum. I must add that he was not himself entirely aware of the nature of the change which he had undergone in his relation to the exterior world, though in justice to a brave man's memory I ought to say that I do not think he would in any case have wasted much of my time in vain remonstrance.

"Uncle William had a ram which was famous in all that region as a fighter. It was in a state of chronic constitutional indignation,

Some deep disappointment in early life had soured its disposition, and it had declared war upon the whole world. To say that it would butt anything accessible is but faintly to express the nature and scope of its military activity; the universe was its antagonist; its method was that of a projectile. It fought, like the angels and devils, in mid-air, cleaving the atmosphere like a bird, describing a parabolic curve and descending upon its victim at just the exact angle of incidence to make the most of its velocity and weight. Its momentum, calculated in foot-tons, was something incredible. It had been seen to destroy a four-year-old bull by a single impact upon that animal's gnarly forehead. No stone wall had ever been known to resist its downward swoop; there were no trees tough enough to stay it; it would splinter them into matchwood and defile their leafy honours in the dust. This irrascible and implacable brute—this incarnate thunderbolt—this monster of the upper deep, I had seen reposing in the shade of an adjacent tree, dreaming dreams of conquest and glory. It was with a view of summoning it forth to the field of honour that I suspended its master in the manner described.

"Having completed my preparations, I imparted to the avuncular pendulum a gentle oscillation, and retiring to cover behind a contiguous rock, lifted up my voice in a long, rasping cry, whose diminishing final note was drowned in a noise like that of a swearing cat, which emanated from the sack. Instantly that formidable sheep was upon its feet and had taken in the military situation at a glance. In a few moments it had approached, stamping, to within fifty yards of the swinging foeman who, now retreating and anon advancing, seemed to invite the fray. Suddenly I saw the beast's head drop earthward as if depressed by the weight of its enormous horns; then a dim, white, wavy streak of sheep prolonged itself from that spot in a generally horizontal direction to within about four yards of a point immediately beneath the enemy. There it struck sharply upward, and before it had faded from my gaze at the place whence it had set out I heard a horrible thump and a piercing scream, and my poor uncle shot forward with a slack rope, higher than the limb to which he was attached. Here the rope tautened with a jerk, arresting his flight, and back he swung in a breathless curve to the other end of his arc. The ram had fallen, a head of indistinguishable legs, wool, and horns, but, pulling itself together and dodging as its antagonist swept downward, it retired at random, alternately shaking its head and stamping its fore-feet. When it had backed about the same distance as that from which it had delivered the assault, it paused again, bowed its head as if in prayer for victory, and again shot forward dimly visibly as before—a prolonging white streak with monstrous undulations, ending with a sharp ascension. Its course this time was at a right angle to its former one, and its impatience so great that it struck the enemy

before he had nearly reached the lowest point of his arc. In consequence he went flying around and around in a horizontal circle, whose radius was about equal to half the length of the rope, which I forgot to say was nearly twenty feet long. His shrieks, crescendo in approach and diminuendo in recession, made the rapidity of his revolution more obvious to the ear than to the eye. He had evidently not yet been struck in a vital spot. His posture in the sack and the distance from the ground at which he hung compelled the ram to operate upon his lower extremities and the end of his back. Like a plant that has struck its root into some poisonous mineral, my poor uncle was dying slowly upward.

" After delivering its second blow the ram had not again retired. The fever of battle burned hot in its heart ; its brain was intoxicated with the wine of strife. Like a pugilist who in his rage forgets his skill and fights ineffectively at half-arm's length, the angry beast endeavoured to reach its fleeting foe by awkward vertical leaps as he passed overhead, sometimes, indeed, succeeding in striking him feebly, but more frequently overthrown by its own misguided eagerness. But as the impetus was exhausted and the man's circles narrowed in scope and diminished in speed, bringing him nearer to the ground, these tactics produced better results and elicited a superior quality of screams, which I greatly enjoyed.

" Suddenly, as if the bugles had sung truce, the ram suspended hostilities and walked away, thoughtfully wrinkling and smoothing its great aquiline nose, and occasionally cropping a bunch of grass and slowly munching it. It seems to have tired of war's alarms and resolved to beat the sword into a ploughshare and cultivate the arts of peace. Steadily it held its course away from the field of fame until it had gained a distance of nearly a quarter of a mile. There it stopped and stood with its rear to the foe, chewing its cud and apparently half asleep. I observed, however, an occasional slight turn of its head, as if its apathy were more affected than real.

" Meanwhile, Uncle William's shrieks had abated with his emotion, and nothing was heard from him but long, low moans, and at long intervals my name, uttered in pleading tones exceedingly grateful to my ear. Evidently the man had not the faintest notion of what was being done to him, and was inexpressibly terrified. When Death comes cloaked in mystery he is terrible indeed. Little by little my uncle's oscillations diminished, and finally he hung motionless. I went to him and was about to give him the *coup de grâce,* when I heard and felt a succession of smart shocks which shook the ground like a series of light earthquakes, and turning in the direction of the ram, saw a cloud of dust approaching me with inconceivable rapidity and alarming effect. At a distance of some thirty yards away it stopped short, and from the near end of it rose into the air what I at first thought a great white bird. Its ascent was so smooth and easy and regular that I could not realise its

extraordinary celerity, and was lost in admiration of its grace. To this day the impression remains that it was a slow, deliberate movement, the ram—for it was that animal—being upborne by some power other than its own impetus, and supported through the successive stages of its flight with infinite tenderness and care. My eyes followed its progress through the air with unspeakable pleasure, all the greater by contrast with my former terror of its approach by land. Onward and upward the noble animal sailed, its head bent down almost between its knees, its fore-feet thrown back, its hinder legs trailing to rear like the legs of a soaring heron. At a height of forty or fifty feet, as near as I could judge, it attained its zenith and appeared to remain an instant stationary ; then, tilting suddenly forward without altering the relative position of its parts, it shot downward on a steeper and steeper course with augmenting velocity, passed immediately above me with a noise like the rush of a cannon shot, and struck my poor uncle almost squarely on top of the head ! So frightful was the impact that not only the neck was broken, but the rope, too ; and the body of the deceased, forced against the earth, was crushed to pulp beneath the awful front of that meteoric sheep. The concussion stopped all the clocks between Lone Hand and Dutch Dan's, and professor Davidson, who happened to be in the vicinity, promptly explained that the vibrations were from the north to south."

Altogether, I cannot help thinking that in point of atrocity my murder of Uncle William has seldom been excelled.

AN OCCURRENCE AT OWL CREEK BRIDGE

AMBROSE BIERCE

I

A MAN stood upon a railroad bridge in Northern Alabama, looking down into the swift waters twenty feet below. The man's hands were behind his back, the wrists bound with a cord. A rope loosely encircled his neck. It was attached to a stout cross-timber above his head, and the slack fell to the level of his knees. Some loose boards laid upon the sleepers supporting the metals of the railway supplied a footing for him and his executioners—two private soldiers of the Federal army, directed by a sergeant, who in civil life may have been a deputy sheriff. At a short remove upon the same temporary platform was an officer in the uniform of his rank, armed.

He was a captain. A sentinel at each end of the bridge stood with his rifle in the position known as "support," that is to say, vertical in front of the left shoulder, the hammer resting on the forearm thrown straight across the chest—a formal and unnatural position, enforcing an erect carriage of the body. It did not appear to be the duty of these two men to know what was occurring at the centre of the bridge; they merely blockaded the two ends of the foot plank which traversed it.

Beyond one of the sentinels nobody was in sight; the railroad ran straight away into a forest for a hundred yards, then, curving, was lost to view. Doubtless there was an outpost farther along. The other bank of the stream was open ground—a gentle acclivity crowned with a stockade of vertical tree trunks, loop-holed for rifles, with a single embrasure through which protruded the muzzle of a brass cannon commanding the bridge. Midway of the slope between bridge and fort were the spectators—a single company of infantry in line, at "parade rest," the butts of the rifles on the ground, the barrels inclining slightly backward against the right shoulder, the hands crossed upon the stock. A lieutenant stood at the right of the line, the point of his sword upon the ground, his left hand resting upon his right. Excepting the group of four at the centre of the bridge not a man moved. The company faced the bridge, staring stonily, motionless. The sentinels, facing the banks of the stream, might have been statues to adorn the bridge. The captain stood with folded arms, silent, observing the work of his subordinates but making no sign. Death is a dignitary who, when he comes announced is to be received with formal manifestations of respect, even by those most familiar with him. In the code of military etiquette silence and fixity are forms of deference.

The man who was engaged in being hanged was apparently about thirty-five years of age. He was a civilian, if one might judge from his dress, which was that of a planter. His features were good—a straight nose, firm mouth, broad forehead, from which his long, dark hair was combed straight back, falling behind his ears to the collar of his well-fitting frock-coat. He wore a moustache and pointed beard, but no whiskers; his eyes were large and dark grey and had a kindly expression which one would hardly have expected in one whose neck was in the hemp. Evidently this was no vulgar assassin. The liberal military code makes provision for hanging many kinds of people, and gentlemen are not excluded.

The preparations being complete, the two private soldiers stepped aside and each drew away the plank upon which he had been standing. The sergeant turned to the captain, saluted and placed himself immediately behind that officer, who in turn moved apart one pace. These movements left the condemned man and the sergeant standing on the two ends of the same plank, which spanned three of the cross-ties of the bridge. The end upon which the civilian stood

almost, but not quite, reached a fourth. This plank had been held in place by the weight of the captain; it was now held by that of the sergeant. At a signal from the former, the latter would step aside, the plank would tilt and the condemned man go down between two ties. The arrangement commended itself to his judgement as simple and effective. His face had not been covered nor his eyes bandaged. He looked a moment at his "unsteadfast footing," then let his gaze wander to the swirling water of the stream racing madly beneath his feet. A piece of dancing driftwood caught his attention and his eyes followed it down the current. How slowly it appeared to move! What a sluggish stream!

He closed his eyes in order to fix his last thoughts upon his wife and children. The water, touched to gold by the early sun, the brooding mists under the banks at some distance down the stream, the fort, the soldiers, the piece of drift—all had distracted him. And now he became conscious of a new disturbance. Striking through the thought of his dear ones was a sound which he could neither ignore nor understand, a sharp, distinct, metallic percussion like the stroke of a blacksmith's hammer upon the anvil; it had the same ringing quality. He wondered what it was, and whether immeasurably distant or near by—it seemed both. Its recurrence was regular, but as slow as the tolling of a death knell. He awaited each stroke with impatience and—he knew not why—apprehension. The intervals of silence grew progressively longer; the delays became maddening. With their greater infrequency the sounds increased in strength and sharpness. They hurt his ear like the thrust of a knife; he feared he would shriek. What he heard was the ticking of his watch.

He unclosed his eyes and saw again the water below him. "If I could free my hands," he thought, "I might throw off the noose and spring into the stream. By diving I could evade the bullets and, swimming vigorously, reach the bank, take to the woods, and get away home. My home, thank God, is as yet outside their lines; my wife and little ones are still beyond the invader's farthest advance."

As these thoughts, which have here to be set down in words, were flashed into the doomed man's brain rather than evolved from it, the captain nodded to the sergeant. The sergeant stepped aside.

II

Peyton Farquhar was a well-to-do planter, of an old and highly-respected Alabama family. Being a slave owner, and, like other slave owners, a politician, he was naturally an original secessionist and ardently devoted to the Southern cause. Circumstances of an imperious nature, which it is unnecessary to relate here, had prevented him from taking service with the gallant army which had

fought the disastrous campaigns ending with the fall of Corinth, and he chafed under the inglorious restraint, longing for the release of his energies, the larger life of the soldier, the opportunity for distinction. That opportunity, he felt, would come, as it comes to all in war-time. Meanwhile he did what he could. No service was too humble for him to perform in aid of the South, no adventure too perilous for him to undertake if consistent with the character of a civilian who was at heart a soldier, and who in good faith and without too much qualification assented to at least a part of the frankly villainous dictum that all is fair in love and war.

One evening, while Farquhar and his wife were sitting on a rustic bench near the entrance to his grounds, a grey-clad soldier rode up to the gate and asked for a drink of water. Mrs. Farquhar was only too happy to serve him with her own white hands. While she was gone to fetch the water, her husband approached the dusty horseman and inquired eagerly for news from the front.

" The Yanks are repairing the railroads," said the man, " and are getting ready for another advance. They have reached the Owl Creek bridge, put it in order, and built a stockade on the other bank. The commandant has issued an order, which is posted everywhere, declaring that any civilian caught interfering with the railroad, its bridges, tunnels, or trains, will be summarily hanged. I saw the order."

" How far is it to the Owl Creek bridge ? " Farquhar asked.

" About thirty miles."

" Is there no force on this side the creek ? "

" Only a picket post half a mile out, on the railroad, and a single sentinel at this end of the bridge."

" Suppose a man—a civilian and student of hanging—should elude the picket post and perhaps get the better of the sentinel," said Farquhar, smiling, " what could he accomplish ? "

The soldier reflected. " I was there a month ago," he replied. " I observed that the flood of last winter had lodged a great quantity of driftwood against the wooden pier at this end of the bridge. It it now dry and would burn like tow."

The lady had now brought the water, which the soldier drank. He thanked her ceremoniously, bowed to her husband, and rode away. An hour later, after nightfall, he repassed the plantation, going northward in the direction from which he had come. He was a Federal scout.

III

As Peyton Farquhar fell straight downward through the bridge, he lost consciousness and was as one already dead. From this state he was awakened—ages later, it seemed to him—by the pain of a sharp pressure upon his throat, followed by a sense of suffocation. Keen, poignant agonies seemed to shoot from his neck downward

through every fibre of his body and limbs. These pains appeared to flash along well-defined lines of ramification, and to beat with an inconceivably rapid periodicity. They seemed like streams of pulsating fire heating him to an intolerable temperature. As to his head, he was conscious of nothing but a feeling of fullness—of congestion. These sensations were unaccompanied by thought. The intellectual part of his nature was already effaced; he had power only to feel, and feeling was torment. He was conscious of motion. Encompassed in a luminous cloud, of which he was now merely the fiery heart, without material substance, he swung through unthinkable arcs of oscillation, like a vast pendulum. Then all at once, with terrible suddenness, the light about him shot upward with the noise of a loud plash; a frightful roaring was in his ears, and all was cold and dark. The power of thought was restored; he knew that the rope had broken and he had fallen into the stream. There was no additional strangulation; the noose about his neck was already suffocating him, and kept the water from his lungs. To die of hanging at the bottom of a river!—the idea seemed to him ludicrous. He opened his eyes in the blackness and saw above him a gleam of light, but how distant, how inaccessible! He was still sinking, for the light became fainter and fainter until it was a mere glimmer. Then it began to grow and brighten, and he knew that he was rising toward the surface—knew it with reluctance, for he was now very comfortable. "To be hanged and drowned," he thought, "that is not so bad; but I do not wish to be shot. No; I will not be shot; that is not fair."

He was not conscious of an effort, but a sharp pain in his wrists apprised him that he was trying to free his hands. He gave the struggle his attention, as an idler might observe the feat of a juggler, without interest in the outcome. What splendid effort!—what magnificent, what superhuman strength! Ah, that was a fine endeavour! Bravo! The cord fell away; his arms parted and floated upward, the hands dimly seen on each side in the growing light. He watched them with a new interest as first one and then the other pounced upon the noose at his neck. They tore it away and thrust it fiercely aside, its undulations resembling those of a water-snake. "Put it back, put it back!" He thought he shouted these words to his hands, for the undoing of the noose had been succeeded by the direst pang which he had yet experienced. His neck ached horribly; his brain was on fire; his heart, which had been fluttering faintly, gave a great leap, trying to force itself out at his mouth. His whole body was racked and wrenched with an insupportable anguish! But his disobedient hands gave no heed to the command. They beat the water vigorously with quick, downward strokes, forcing him to the surface. He felt his head emerge; his eyes were blinded by the sunlight; his chest expanded convulsively, and with a supreme and crowning agony his lungs

engulfed a great draught of air, which instantly he expelled in a shriek!

He was now in full possession of his physical senses. They were, indeed, preternaturally keen and alert. Something in the awful disturbance of his organic system had so exalted and refined them that they made record of things never before perceived. He felt the ripples upon his face and heard their separate sounds as they struck. He looked at the forest on the bank of the stream, saw the individual trees, the leaves and the veining of each leaf—saw the very insects upon them, the locusts, the brilliant-bodied flies, the grey spiders stretching their webs from twig to twig. He noted the prismatic colours in all the dewdrops upon a million blades of grass. The humming of the gnats that danced above the eddies of the stream, the beating of the dragon flies' wings, the strokes of the water spiders' legs, like oars which had lifted their boat—all these made audible music. A fish slid along beneath his eyes and he heard the rush of its body parting the water.

He had come to the surface facing down the stream; in a moment the visible world seemed to wheel slowly round, himself the pivotal point, and he saw the bridge, the fort, the soldiers upon the bridge, the captain, the sergeant, the two privates, his executioners. They were in silhouette against the blue sky. They shouted and gesticulated, pointing at him; the captain had drawn his pistol, but did not fire; the others were unarmed. Their movements were grotesque and horrible, their forms gigantic.

Suddenly he heard a sharp report and something struck the water smartly within a few inches of his head, spattering his face with spray. He heard a second report, and saw one of the sentinels with his rifle at his shoulder, a light cloud of blue smoke rising from the muzzle. The man in the water saw the eye of the man on the bridge gazing into his own through the sights of the rifle. He observed that it was a grey eye, and remembered having read that grey eyes were keenest and that all famous marksmen had them. Nevertheless, this one had missed.

A counter swirl had caught Farquhar and turned him half round; he was again looking into the forest on the bank opposite the fort. The sound of a clear, high voice in a monotonous singsong now rang out behind him and came across the water with a distinctness that pierced and subdued all other sounds, even the beating of the ripples in his ears. Although no soldier, he had frequented camps enough to know the dread significance of that deliberate, drawling, aspirated chant; the lieutenant on shore was taking a part in the morning's work. How coldly and pitilessly—with what an even, calm intonation, presaging and enforcing tranquillity in the men—with what accurately measured intervals fell those cruel words:

"Attention, company. . . . Shoulder arms. . . . Ready. . . . Aim. . . . Fire."

Farquhar dived—dived as deeply as he could. The water roared in his ears like the voice of Niagara, yet he heard the dulled thunder of the volley, and rising again toward the surface, met shining bits of metal, singularly flattened, oscillating slowly downward. Some of them touched him on the face and hands, then fell away, continuing their descent. One lodged between his collar and neck; it was uncomfortably warm, and he snatched it out.

As he rose to the surface, gasping for breath, he saw that he had been a long time under water; he was perceptibly farther down stream—nearer to safety. The soldiers had almost finished reloading; the metal ramrods flashed all at once in the sunshine as they were drawn from the barrels, turned in the air, and thrust into their sockets. The two sentinels fired again, independently and ineffectually.

The hunted man saw all this over his shoulder; he was now swimming vigorously with the current. His brain was as energetic as his arms and legs; he thought with the rapidity of lightning.

"The officer," he reasoned, "will not make that martinet's error a second time. It is as easy to dodge a volley as a single shot. He has probably already given the command to fire at will. God help me, I cannot dodge them all!"

An appalling plash within two yards of him, followed by a loud rushing sound, *diminuendo*, which seemed to travel back through the air to the fort and died in an explosion which stirred the very river to its deeps! A rising sheet of water, which curved over him, fell down upon him, blinded him, strangled him! The cannon had taken a hand in the game. As he shook his head free from the commotion of the smitten water, he heard the deflected shot humming through the air ahead, and in an instant it was cracking and smashing the branches in the forest beyond.

"They will not do that again," he thought; "the next time they will use a charge of grape. I must keep my eye upon the gun; the smoke will apprise me—the report arrives too late; it lags behind the missile. It is a good gun."

Suddenly he felt himself whirled round and round—spinning like a top. The water, the banks, the forest, the now distant bridge, fort, and men—all were commingled and blurred. Objects were represented by their colours only; circular horizontal streaks of colour—that was all he saw. He had been caught in a vortex and was being whirled on with a velocity of advance and gyration which made him giddy and sick. In a few moments he was flung upon the gravel at the foot of the left bank of the stream—the southern bank—and behind a projecting point which concealed him from his enemies. The sudden arrest of his motion, the abrasion of one of his hands on the gravel, restored him and he wept with delight. He dug his fingers into the sand, threw it over himself in handfuls, and audibly blessed it. It looked like gold, like diamonds, rubies,

emeralds; he could think of nothing beautiful which it did not resemble. The trees upon the bank were giant garden plants; he noted a definite order in their arrangement, inhaled the fragrance of their blooms. A strange, roseate light shone through the spaces among their trunks, and the wind made in their branches the music of æolian harps. He had no wish to perfect his escape, was content to remain in that enchanting spot until retaken.

A whizz and rattle of grapeshot among the branches high above his head roused him from his dream. The baffled cannoneer had fired him a random farewell. He sprang to his feet, rushed up the sloping bank, and plunged into the forest.

All that day he travelled, laying his course by the rounding sun. The forest seemed interminable; nowhere did he discover a break in it, not even a woodman's road. He had not known that he lived in so wild a region. There was something uncanny in the revelation.

By nightfall he was fatigued, footsore, famishing. The thought of his wife and children urged him on. At last he found a road which led him in what he knew to be the right direction. It was as wide and straight as a city street, yet it seemed untravelled. No fields bordered it, no dwelling anywhere. Not so much as the barking of a dog suggested human habitation. The black bodies of the great trees formed a straight wall on both sides, terminating on the horizon in a point, like a diagram in a lesson in perspective. Overhead, as he looked up through this rift in the wood, shone great golden stars looking unfamiliar and grouped in strange constellations. He was sure they were arranged in some order which had a secret and malign significance. The wood on either side was full of singular noises, among which—once, twice, and again—he distinctly heard whispers in an unknown tongue.

His neck was in pain, and, lifting his hand to it, he found it horribly swollen. He knew that it had a circle of black where the rope had bruised it. His eyes felt congested; he could no longer close them. His tongue was swollen with thirst; he relieved its fever by thrusting it forward from between his teeth into the cool air. How softly the turf had carpeted the untravelled avenue! He could no longer feel the roadway beneath his feet!

Doubtless, despite his suffering, he fell asleep while walking, for now he sees another scene—perhaps he has merely recovered from a delirium. He stands at the gate of his own home. All is as he left it, and all bright and beautiful in the morning sunshine. He must have travelled the entire night. As he pushes open the gate and passes up the wide white walk, he sees a flutter of female garments; his wife, looking fresh and cool and sweet, steps down from the verandah to meet him. At the bottom of the steps she stands waiting, with a smile of ineffable joy, an attitude of matchless grace and dignity. Ah, how beautiful she is! He springs forward with extended arms. As he is about to clasp her, he feels a stunning blow upon the back

of the neck; a blinding white light blazes all about him with a sound like the shock of a cannon—then all is darkness and silence!

Peyton Farquhar was dead; his body, with a broken neck, swung gently from side to side beneath the timbers of the Owl Creek bridge.

THE AFFAIR AT COULTER'S NOTCH

AMBROSE BIERCE

"Do you think, colonel, that your brave Coulter would like to put one of his guns in here!" the general asked.

He was apparently not altogether serious; it certainly did not seem a place where any artillerist, however brave, would like to put a gun. The colonel thought that possibly his division commander meant good-humouredly to intimate that Captain Coulter's courage had been too highly extolled in a recent conversation between them.

"General," he replied warmly, "Coulter would like to put a gun anywhere within reach of those people," with a motion of his hand in the direction of the enemy.

"It is the only place," said the general. He was serious, then.

The place was a depression, a "notch," in the sharp crest of a hill. It was a pass, and through it ran a turnpike, which, reaching this highest point in its course by a sinuous ascent through a thin forest, made a similar, though less steep, descent toward the enemy. For a mile to the left and a mile to the right the ridge, though occupied by Federal infantry lying close behind the sharp crest, and appearing as if held in place by atmospheric pressure, was inaccessible to artillery. There was no place but the bottom of the notch, and that was barely wide enough for the roadbed. From the Confederate side this point was commanded by two batteries posted on a slightly lower elevation beyond a creek, and a half-mile away. All the guns but one were masked by the trees of an orchard; that one—it seemed a bit of impudence—was directly in front of a rather grandiose building, the planter's dwelling. The gun was safe enough in its exposure—but only because the Federal infantry had been forbidden to fire. Coulter's Notch—it came to be called so—was not, that pleasant summer afternoon, a place where one would "like to put a gun."

Three or four dead horses lay there, sprawling in the road, three

or four dead men in a trim row at one side of it, and a little back, down the hill. All but one were cavalrymen belonging to the Federal advance. One was a quartermaster. The general commanding the division and the colonel commanding the brigade, with their staffs and escorts, had ridden into the notch to have a look at the enemy's guns—which had straightway obscured themselves in towering clouds of smoke. It was hardly profitable to be curious about guns which had the trick of the cuttlefish, and the season of observation was brief. At its conclusion—a short remove backward from where it began—occurred the conversation already partly reported. "It is the only place," the general repeated thoughtfully, "to get at them."

The colonel looked at him gravely. "There is room for but one gun, General—one against twelve."

"That is true—for only one at a time," said the commander with something like, yet not altogether like, a smile. "But then, your brave Coulter—a whole battery in himself."

The tone of irony was now unmistakable. It angered the colonel, but he did not know what to say. The spirit of military subordination is not favourable to retort, nor even deprecation. At this moment a young officer of artillery came riding slowly up the road attended by his bugler. It was Captain Coulter. He could not have been more than twenty-three years of age. He was of medium height, but very slender and lithe, sitting his horse with something of the air of a civilian. In face he was of a type singularly unlike the men about him; thin, high-nosed, grey-eyed, with a slight blonde moustache, and long, rather straggling hair of the same colour. There was an apparent negligence in his attire. His cap was worn with the visor a trifle askew; his coat was buttoned only at the sword belt, showing a considerable expanse of white shirt, tolerably clean for that stage of the campaign. But the negligence was all in his dress and bearing; in his face was a look of intense interest in his surroundings. His grey eyes, which seemed occasionally to strike right and left across the landscape, like searchlights, were for the most part fixed upon the sky beyond the Notch; until he should arrive at the summit of the road, there was nothing else in that direction to see. As he came opposite his division and brigade commanders at the roadside he saluted mechanically and was about to pass on. Moved by a sudden impulse, the colonel signed him to halt.

"Captain Coulter," he said, "the enemy has twelve pieces over there on the next ridge. If I rightly understand the general, he directs that you bring up a gun and engage them."

There was a blank silence; the general looked stolidly at a distant regiment swarming slowly up the hill through rough undergrowth, like a torn and draggled cloud of blue smoke; the captain appeared not to have observed him. Presently the captain spoke,

slowly and with apparent effort :—

"On the next ridge, did you say, sir? Are the guns near the house?"

"Ah, you have been over this road before! Directly at the house."

"And it is—necessary—to engage them? The order is imperative?"

His voice was husky and broken. He was visibly paler. The colonel was astonished and mortified. He stole a glance at the commander. In that set, immobile face was no sign; it was as hard as bronze. A moment later the general rode away, followed by his staff and escort. The colonel, humiliated and indignant, was about to order Captain Coulter into arrest, when the latter spoke a few words in a low tone to his bugler, saluted, and rode straight forward into the Notch, where, presently, at the summit of the road, his field-glass at his eyes, he showed against the sky, he and his horse, sharply defined and motionless as an equestrian statue. The bugler had dashed down the road in the opposite direction at headlong speed and disappeared behind a wood. Presently his bugle was heard singing in the cedars, and in an incredibly short time a single gun with its caisson, each drawn by six horses and manned by its full complement of gunners, came bounding and banging up the grade in a storm of dust, unlimbered under cover, and was run forward by hand to the fatal crest among the dead horses. A gesture of the captain's arm, some strangely agile movements of the men in loading, and almost before the troops along the way had ceased to hear the rattle of the wheels, a great white cloud sprang forward down the slope, and with a deafening report the affair at Coulter's Notch had begun.

It is not intended to relate in detail the progress and incidents of that ghastly contest—a contest without vicissitudes, its alternations only different degrees of despair. Almost at the instant when Captain Coulter's gun blew its challenging cloud twelve answering clouds rolled upward from among the trees about the plantation house, a deep multiple report roared back like a broken echo, and thenceforth to the end the Federal cannoneers fought their hopeless battle in an atmosphere of living iron whose thoughts were lightnings and whose deeds were death.

Unwilling to see the efforts which he could not aid and the slaughter which he could not stay, the colonel had ascended the ridge at a point a quarter of a mile to the left, whence the Notch, itself invisible but pushing up successive masses of smoke, seemed the crater of a volcano in thundering eruption. With his glass he watched the enemy's guns, noting as he could the effects of Coulter's fire—if Coulter still lived to direct it. He saw that the Federal gunners, ignoring the enemy's pieces, whose position could be determined by their smoke only, gave their whole attention to the one which maintained its place in the open—the lawn in front of

the house, with which it was accurately in line. Over and about that hardy piece the shells exploded at intervals of a few seconds. Some exploded in the house, as could be seen by thin ascensions of smoke from the breached roof. Figures of prostrate men and horses were plainly visible.

"If our fellows are doing such good work with a single gun," said the colonel to an aide who happened to be nearest, "they must be suffering like the devil from twelve. Go down and present the commander of that piece with my congratulations on the accuracy of his fire."

Turning to his adjutant-general he said, "Did you observe Coulter's damned reluctance to obey orders?"

"Yes, sir, I did."

"Well say nothing about it, please. I don't think the general will care to make any accusations. He will probably have enough to do in explaining his own connection with this uncommon way of amusing the rearguard of a retreating enemy."

A young officer approached from below, climbing breathless up the acclivity. Almost before he had saluted he gasped out:—

"Colonel, I am directed by Colonel Harmon to say that the enemy's guns are within easy reach of our rifles, and most of them visible from various points along the ridge."

The brigade commander looked at him without a trace of interest in his expression. "I know it," he said quietly.

The young adjutant was visibly embarrassed. "Colonel Harmon would like to have permission to silence those guns," he stammered.

"So should I," the colonel said in the same tone. "Present my compliments to Colonel Harmon and say to him that the general's orders not to fire are still in force."

The adjutant saluted and retired. The colonel ground his heel into the earth and turned to look again at the enemy's guns.

"Colonel," said the adjutant-general, "I don't know that I ought to say anything, but there is something wrong in all this. Do you happen to know that Captain Coulter is from the South?"

"No; *was* he, indeed?"

"I heard that last summer the division which the general then commanded was in the vicinity of Coulter's home—camped there for weeks, and——"

"Listen!" said the colonel, interrupting with an upward gesture. "Do you hear *that*?"

"That" was the silence of the Federal gun. The staff, the orderlies, the lines of infantry behind the crest—all had "heard," and were looking curiously in the direction of the crater, whence no smoke now ascended except desultory cloudlets from the enemy's shells. Then came the blare of a bugle, a faint rattle of wheels; a minute later the sharp reports recommenced with double activity. The demolished gun had been replaced with a sound one.

"Yes," said the adjutant-general, resuming his narrative, "the general made the acquaintance of Coulter's family. There was trouble—I don't know the exact nature of it—something about Coulter's wife. She is a red-hot Secessionist, as they all are, except Coulter himself, but she is a good wife and high-bred lady. There was a complaint to army headquarters. The general was transferred to this division. It is odd that Coulter's battery should afterward have been assigned to it."

The colonel had risen from the rock upon which they had been sitting. His eyes were blazing with a generous indignation.

"See here, Morrison," said he, looking his gossiping staff officer straight in the face, "did you get that story from a gentleman or a liar?"

"I don't want to say how I got it, Colonel, unless it is necessary"—he was blushing a trifle—"but I'll stake my life upon its truth in the main."

The colonel turned toward a small knot of officers some distance away. "Lieutenant Williams!" he shouted.

One of the officers detached himself from the group, and, coming forward, saluted, saying: "Pardon me, Colonel, I thought you had been informed. Williams is dead down there by the gun. What can I do, sir?"

Lieutenant Williams was the aide who had had the pleasure of conveying to the officer in charge of the gun his brigade commander's congratulations.

"Go," said the colonel, "and direct the withdrawal of that gun instantly. Hold! I'll go myself."

He strode down the declivity toward the rear of the Notch at a break-neck pace, over rocks and through brambles, followed by his little retinue in tumultuous disorder. At the foot of the declivity they mounted their waiting animals and took to the road at a lively trot, round a bend and into the Notch. The spectacle which they encountered there was appalling.

Within that defile, barely broad enough for a single gun, were piled the wrecks of no fewer than four. They had noted the silencing of only the last one disabled—there had been a lack of men to replace it quickly. The *debris* lay on both sides of the road; the men had managed to keep an open way between, through which the fifth piece was now firing. The men?—they looked like demons of the pit! All were hatless, all stripped to the waist, their reeking skins black with blotches of powder and spattered with gouts of blood. They worked like madmen, with rammer and cartridge, lever and lanyard. They set their swollen shoulders and bleeding hands against the wheels at each recoil and heaved the heavy gun back to its place. There were no commands; in that awful environment of whooping shot, exploding shells, shrieking fragments of iron, and flying splinters of wood, none could have been heard.

Officers, if officers there were, were indistinguishable; all worked together—each while he lasted—governed by the eye. When the gun was sponged, it was loaded; when loaded, aimed and fired. The colonel observed something new to his military experience—something horrible and unnatural: the gun was bleeding at the mouth! In temporary default of water, the man sponging had dipped his sponge in a pool of his comrades' blood. In all this work there was no clashing; the duty of the instant was obvious. When one fell, another, looking a trifle cleaner, seemed to rise from the earth in the dead man's tracks, to fall in his turn.

With the ruined guns lay the ruined men—alongside the wreckage, under it and atop of it; and back down the road—a ghastly procession!—crept on hands and knees such of the wounded as were able to move. The colonel—he had compassionately sent his cavalcade to the right about—had to ride over those who were entirely dead in order not to crush those who were partly alive. Into that hell he tranquilly held his way, rode up alongside the gun, and, in the obscurity of the last discharge, tapped upon the cheek the man holding the rammer, who straightway fell, thinking himself killed. A fiend seven times damned sprang out of the smoke to take his place, but paused and gazed up at the mounted officer with an unearthly regard, his teeth flashing between his black lips, his eyes, fierce and expanded, burning like coals beneath his bloody brow. The colonel made an authoritative gesture and pointed to the rear. The fiend bowed in token of obedience. It was Captain Coulter.

Simultaneously with the colonel's arresting sign silence fell upon the whole field of action. The procession of missiles no longer streamed into that defile of death; the enemy also had ceased firing. His army had been gone for hours, and the commander of his rearguard, who had held his position perilously long in hope to silence the Federal fire, at that strange moment had silenced his own. "I was not aware of the breadth of my authority," thought the colonel facetiously, riding forward to the crest to see what had really happened.

An hour later his brigade was in bivouac on the enemy's ground, and its idlers were examining, with something of awe, as the faithful inspect a saint's relics, a score of straddling dead horses and three disabled guns, all spiked. The fallen men had been carried away; their crushed and broken bodies would have given too great satisfaction.

Naturally, the colonel established himself and his military family in the plantation house. It was somewhat shattered, but it was better than the open air. The furniture was greatly deranged and broken. The walls and ceilings were knocked away here and there, and there was a lingering odour of powder smoke everywhere. The beds, the closets of women's clothing, the cupboards were not greatly damaged. The new tenants for a night made themselves

comfortable, and the practical effacement of Coulter's battery supplied them with an interesting topic.

During supper that evening an orderly of the escort showed himself into the dining-room, and asked permission to speak to the colonel.

"What is it, Barbour?" said that officer pleasantly, having overheard the request.

"Colonel, there is something wrong in the cellar; I don't know what—somebody there. I was down there rummaging about."

"I will go down and see," said a staff officer, rising.

"So will I," the colonel said; "let the others remain. Lead on orderly."

They took a candle from the table and descended the cellar stairs, the orderly in visible trepidation. The candle made but a feeble light, but presently, as they advanced, its narrow circle of illumination revealed a human figure seated on the ground against the black stone wall which they were skirting, its knees elevated, its head bowed sharply forward. The face, which should have been seen in profile, was invisible, for the man was bent so far forward that his long hair concealed it; and, strange to relate, the beard, of a much darker hue, fell in a great tangled mass and lay along the ground at his feet. They involuntarily paused; then the colonel, taking the candle from the orderly's shaking hand, approached the man and attentively considered him. The long dark beard was the hair of a woman—dead. The dead woman clasped in her arms a dead babe. Both were clasped in the arms of the man, pressed against his breast, against his lips. There was blood in the hair of the woman; there was blood in the hair of the man. A yard away lay an infant's foot. It was near an irregular depression in the beaten earth which formed the cellar's floor—a fresh excavation with a convex bit of iron, having jagged edges, visible in one of the sides. The colonel held the light as high as he could. The floor of the room above was broken through, the splinters pointing at all angles downward. "This casemate is not bomb-proof," said the colonel gravely; it did not occur to him that his summing up of the matter had any levity in it.

They stood about the group awhile in silence; the staff officer was thinking of his unfinished supper, the orderly of what might possibly be in one of the casks on the other side of the cellar. Suddenly the man, whom they had thought dead, raised his head and gazed tranquilly into their faces. His complexion was coal black; the cheeks were apparently tattooed in irregular sinuous lines from the eyes downward. The lips, too, were white, like those of a stage negro. There was blood upon his forehead.

The staff officer drew back a pace, the orderly two paces.

"What are you doing here, my man?" said the colonel, unmoved.

"This house belongs to me, sir," was the reply, civilly delivered.
"To you? Ah, I see! And these?"
"My wife and child. I am Captain Coulter."

A WATCHER BY THE DEAD

AMBROSE BIERCE

I

IN an upper room of an unoccupied dwelling in that part of San Francisco known as North Beach lay the body of a man under a sheet. The hour was near nine in the evening; the room was dimly lighted by a single candle. Although the weather was warm, the two windows, contrary to the custom which gives the dead plenty of air, were closed and the blinds drawn down. The furniture of the room consisted of but three pieces—an arm-chair, a small reading-stand, supporting the candle, and a long kitchen-table, supporting the body of the man. All these, as also the corpse, would seem to have been recently brought in, for an observer, had there been one, would have seen that all were free from dust, whereas everything else in the room was pretty thickly coated with it, and there were cobwebs in the angles of the walls.

Under the sheet the outlines of the body could be traced, even the features, these having that unnaturally sharp definition which seems to belong to faces of the dead, but is really characteristic of those only that have been wasted by disease. From the silence of the room one would rightly have inferred that it was not in the front of the house, facing a street. It really faced nothing but a high breast of rock, the rear of the building being set into a hill.

As a neighbouring church clock was striking nine with an indolence which seemed to imply such an indifference to the flight of time that one could hardly help wondering why it took the trouble to strike at all, the single door of the room was opened and a man entered, advancing toward the body. As he did so the door closed, apparently of its own volition; there was a grating, as of a key turned with difficulty and the snap of the lock bolt as it shot into its socket. A sound of retiring footsteps in the passage outside ensued, and the man was, to all appearance, a prisoner. Advancing to the table, he stood a moment looking down at the body; then, with a slight shrug of the shoulders, walked over to one of the windows and hoisted the blind. The darkness outside was absolute, the panes were covered with dust, but, by wiping this away, he

could see that the window was fortified with strong iron bars crossing it within a few inches of the glass, and imbedded in the masonry on each side. He examined the other window. It was the same. He manifested no great curiosity in the matter, did not even so much as raise the sash. If he was a prisoner he was apparently a tractable one. Having completed his examination of the room, he seated himself in the arm-chair, took a book from his pocket, drew the stand with its candle alongside and began to read.

The man was young—not more than thirty—dark in complexion, smoothed-shaven, with brown hair. His face was thin and high-nosed, with a broad forehead and a " firmness " of the chin and jaw which is said by those having it to denote resolution. The eyes were grey and steadfast, not moving except with definitive purpose. They were now for the greater part of the time fixed upon his book, but he occasionally withdrew them and turned them to the body on the table, not, apparently, from any dismal fascination which, in such circumstances, it might be supposed to exercise upon even a courageous person, nor with a conscious rebellion against the opposite influence which might dominate a timid one. He looked at it as if in his reading he had come upon something recalling him to a sense of his surroundings. Clearly this watcher by the dead was discharging his trust with intelligence and composure, as became him.

After reading for perhaps a half-hour he seemed to come to the end of a chapter and quietly laid away the book. He then rose, and, taking the reading-stand from the floor, carried it into a corner of the room near one of the windows, lifted the candle from it, and returned to the empty fireplace before which he had been sitting.

A moment later he walked over to the body on the table, lifted the sheet, and turned it back from the head, exposing a mass of dark hair and a thin face-cloth, beneath which the features showed with even sharper definition than before. Shading his eyes by interposing his free hand between them and the candle, he stood looking at his motionless companion with a serious and tranquil regard. Satisfied with his inspection, he pulled the sheet over the face again, and, returning to his chair, took some matches off the candlestick, put them in the side-pocket of his sack coat and sat down. He then lifted the candle from its socket and looked at it critically, as if calculating how long it would last. It was barely two inches long ; in another hour he would be in darkness ! He replaced it in the candlestick and blew it out.

II

In a physician's office in Kearny Street three men sat about a table, drinking punch and smoking. It was late in the evening, almost midnight, indeed, and there had been no lack of punch.

The eldest of the three, Dr. Helberson, was the host ; it was in his rooms they sat. He was about thirty years of age ; the others were even younger ; all were physicians.

" The superstitious awe with which the living regard the dead," said Dr. Helberson, " is hereditary and incurable. One need no more be ashamed of it than of the fact that he inherits, for example, an incapacity for mathematics, or a tendency to lie."

The others laughed. " Oughtn't a man to be ashamed to be a liar ? " asked the youngest of the three, who was, in fact a medical student not yet graduated.

" My dear Harper, I said nothing about that. The tendency to lie is one thing ; lying is another."

" But do you think," said the third man, " that this superstitious feeling, this fear of the dead, reasonless as we know it to be, is universal ? I am myself not conscious of it."

" Oh, but it is ' in your system ' for all that," replied Helberson : " it needs only the right conditions—what Shakespeare calls the ' confederate season '—to manifest itself in some very disagreeable way that will open your eyes. Physicians and soldiers are, of course, more nearly free from it than others."

" Physicians and soldiers ;—why don't you add hangmen and headsmen ? Let us have in all the assassin classes."

" No, my dear Mancher ; the juries will not let the public executioners acquire sufficient familiarity with death to be altogether unmoved by it."

Young Harper, who had been helping himself to a fresh cigar at the sideboard, resumed his seat. " What would you consider conditions under which any man of woman born would become insupportably conscious of his share of our common weakness in this regard ? " he asked rather verbosely.

" Well, I should say that if a man were locked up all night with a corpse—alone—in a dark room—of a vacant house—with no bed-covers to pull over his head—and lived through it without going altogether mad—he might justly boast himself not of woman born, nor yet, like Macduff, a product of Cæsarean section."

" I thought you never would finish piling up conditions," said Harper ; " but I know a man who is neither a physician nor a soldier who will accept them all, for any stake you like to name."

" Who is he ? "

" His name is Jarette—a stranger in California ; comes from my town in New York. I haven't any money to back him, but he will back himself with dead loads of it."

" How do you know that ? "

" He would rather bet than eat. As for fear—I dare say he thinks it some cutaneous disorder, or, possibly, a particular kind of religious heresy."

" What does he look like ? " Helberson was evidently becoming interested.

"Like Mancher, here—might be his twin brother."

"I accept the challenge," said Helberson promptly.

"Awfully obliged to you for the compliment, I'm sure," drawled Mancher, who was growing sleepy. "Can't I get into this?"

"Not against me," Helberson said. "I don't want *your* money."

"All right," said Mancher; "I'll be the corpse."

The others laughed.

The outcome of this crazy conversation we have seen.

III

In extinguishing his meagre allowance of candle Mr. Jarette's object was to preserve it against some unforseen need. He may have thought, too, or half-thought, that the darkness would be no worse at one time than another, and if the situation became insupportable, it would be better to have a means of relief, or even release. At any rate, it was wise to have a little reserve of light, even if only to enable him to look at his watch.

No sooner had he blown out the candle and set it on the floor at his side than he settled himself comfortably in the arm-chair, leaned back and closed his eyes, hoping and expecting to sleep. In this he was disappointed; he had never in his life felt less sleepy, and in a few minutes he gave up the attempt. But what could he do? He could not go groping about in the absolute darkness at the risk of bruising himself—at the risk, too, of blundering against the table and rudely disturbing the dead. We all recognise their right to lie at rest, with immunity from all that is harsh and violent. Jarette almost succeeded in making himself believe that considerations of that kind restrained him from risking the collision and fixed him to the chair.

While thinking of this matter he fancied that he heard a faint sound in the direction of the table—what kind of sound he could hardly have explained. He did not turn his head. Why should he—in the darkness? But he listened—why should he not? And listening he grew giddy and grasped the arms of the chair for support. There was a strange ringing in his ears; his head seemed bursting; his chest was oppressed by the constriction of his clothing. He wondered why it was so, and whether these were symptoms of fear. Suddenly, with a long and strong expiration, his chest appeared to collapse, and with the great gasp with which he refilled his exhausted lungs the vertigo left him, and he knew that so intently had he listened that he had held his breath almost to suffocation. The revelation was vexatious; he arose, pushed away the chair with his foot, and strode to the centre of the room. But one does not stride far in darkness; he began to grope, and, finding the wall, followed it to an angle, turned, followed it past the two windows, and there in another corner came into violent contact with the

reading-stand, overturning it. It made a clatter which startled him. He was annoyed. "How the devil could I have forgotten where it was!" he muttered, and groped his way along the third wall to the fireplace. "I must put things to rights," said Mr. Jarette, feeling the floor for the candle.

Having recovered that, he lighted it and instantly turned his eyes to the table, where, naturally, nothing had undergone any change. The reading-stand lay unobserved upon the floor; he had forgotten to "put it to rights." He looked all about the room, dispersing the deeper shadows by movements of the candle in his hand, and, finally, crossing over to the door, tried it by turning and pulling the knob with all his strength. It did not yield, and this seemed to afford him a certain satisfaction; indeed, he secured it more firmly by a bolt which he had not before observed. Returning to his chair, he looked at his watch; it was half-past nine. With a start of surprise he held the watch at his ear. It had not stopped. The candle was now visibly shorter. He again extinguished it, placing it on the floor at his side as before.

Mr. Jarette was not at his ease; he was distinctly dissatisfied with his surroundings, and with himself for being so. "What have I to fear?" he thought. "This is ridiculous and disgraceful; I will not be so great a fool." But courage does not come of saying, "I will be courageous," nor of recognising its appropriateness to the occasion. The more Jarette condemned himself, the more reason he gave himself for condemnation; the greater the number of variations which he played upon the simple theme of the harmlessness of the dead, the more horrible grew the discord of his emotions. "What!" he cried aloud in the anguish of his spirit, "what! shall I, who have not a shade of superstition in my nature—I, who have no belief in immortality—I, who know (and never more clearly than now) that the after-life is the dream of a desire—shall I lose at once my bet, my honour, and my self-respect, perhaps my reason, because certain savage ancestors, dwelling in caves and burrows, conceived the monstrous notion that the dead walk by night; that——" distinctly, unmistakably, Mr. Jarette heard behind him a light, soft sound of footfalls, deliberate, regular, and successively nearer!

IV

Just before daybreak the next morning Dr. Helberson and his young friend Harper were driving slowly through the streets of North Beach in the doctor's coupé.

"Have you still the confidence of youth in the courage or stolidity of your friend?" said the elder man. "Do you believe that I have lost this wager?"

"I *know* you have," replied the other, with enfeebling emphasis.

"Well, upon my soul, I hope so." It was spoken earnestly,

almost solemnly. There was a silence for a few moments.

" Harper," the doctor resumed, looking very serious in the shifting half-lights that entered the carriage as they passed the street-lamps, " I don't feel altogether comfortable about this business. If your friend had not irritated me by the contemptuous manner in which he treated my doubt of his endurance—a purely physical quality—and by the cool incivility of his suggestion that the corpse be that of a physician, I should not have gone on with it. If anything should happen, we are ruined, as I fear we deserve to be."

" What can happen ? Even if the matter should be taking a serious turn—of which I am not at all afraid—Mancher has only to resurrect himself and explain matters. With a genuine ' subject ' from the dissecting-room, or one of your late patients, it might be different."

Dr. Mancher, then, had been as good as his promise ; he was the " corpse." Dr. Helberson was silent for a long time, as the carriage, at a snail's pace, crept along the same street it had travelled two or three times already. Presently he spoke : " Well, let us hope that Mancher, if he has had to rise from the dead, has been discreet about it. A mistake in that might make matters worse instead of better."

" Yes," said Harper, " Jarette would kill him. But, doctor "— looking at his watch as the carriage passed a gas-lamp—" it is nearly four o'clock at last."

A moment later the two had quitted the vehicle, and were walking briskly toward the long unoccupied house belonging to the doctor, in which they had immured Mr. Jarette, in accordance with the terms of the mad wager. As they neared it, they met a man running. " Can you tell me," he cried, suddenly checking his speed, " where I can find a physician ? "

" What's the matter ? " Helberson asked, non-committal.

" Go and see for yourself," said the man, resuming his running.

They hastened on. Arrived at the house, they saw several persons entering in haste and excitement. In some of the dwellings near by and across the way the chamber windows were thrown up, showing a protrusion of heads. All heads were asking questions, none heeding the questions of the others. A few of the windows with closed blinds were illuminated ; the inmates of those rooms were dressing to come down. Exactly opposite the door of the house which they sought a street-lamp threw a yellow, insufficient light upon the scene, seeming to say that it could disclose a good deal more if it wished. Harper, who was now deathly pale, paused at the door and laid a hand upon his companion's arm. " It's all up with us, doctor," he said in extreme agitation, which contrasted strangely with his free and easy words ; " the game has gone against us all. Let's not go in there ; I'm for lying low."

"I'm a physician," said Dr. Helberson calmly; "there may be need of one."

They mounted the doorsteps and were about to enter. The door was open; the street lamp opposite lighted the passage into which it opened. It was full of people. Some had ascended the stairs at the farther end, and, denied admittance above, waited for better fortune. All were talking, none listening. Suddenly, on the upper landing there was a great commotion; a man had sprung out of a door and was breaking away from those endeavouring to detain him. Down through the mass of affrighted idlers he came, pushing them aside, flattening them against the wall on one side, or compelling them to cling by the rail on the other, clutching them by the throat, striking them savagely, thrusting them back down the stairs, and walking over the fallen. His clothing was in disorder, he was without a hat. His eyes, wild and restless, had in them something more terrifying than his apparently superhuman strength. His face, smooth-shaven, was bloodless, his hair snow white.

As the crowd at the foot of the stairs, having more freedom, fell away to let him pass, Harper sprang forward. "Jarette! Jarette!" he cried.

Dr. Helberson seized Harper by the collar and dragged him back. The man looked into their faces without seeming to see them, and sprang through the door, down the steps, into the street and away. A stout policeman, who had had inferior success in conquering his way down the stairway, followed a moment later and started in pursuit, all the heads in the windows—those of women and children now—screaming in guidance.

The stairway being now partly cleared, most of the crowd having rushed down to the street to observe the flight and pursuit, Dr. Helberson mounted to the landing, followed by Harper. At a door in the upper passage an officer denied them admittance. "We are physicians," said the doctor, and they passed in. The room was full of men, dimly seen, crowded about a table. The newcomers edged their way forward, and looked over the shoulders of those in the front rank. Upon the table, the lower limbs covered with a sheet, lay the body of a man, brilliantly illuminated by the beam of a bull's-eye lantern held by a policeman standing at the feet. The others, excepting those near the head—the officer himself—all were in darkness. The face of the body showed yellow, repulsive, horrible! The eyes were partly open and upturned, and the jaw fallen; traces of froth defiled the lips, the chin, the cheeks. A tall man, evidently a physician, bent over the body with his hand thrust under the shirt front. He withdrew it and placed two fingers in the open mouth. "This man has been about two hours dead," said he. "It is a case for the coroner."

He drew a card from his pocket, handed it to the officer, and made his way toward the door.

"Clear the room—out, all!" said the officer sharply, and the body disappeared as if it had been snatched away, as he shifted the lantern and flashed its beam of light here and there against the faces of the crowd. The effect was amazing! The men, blinded, confused, almost terrified, made a tumultuous rush for the door, pushing, crowding, and tumbling over one another as they fled, like the hosts of Night before the shafts of Apollo. Upon the struggling, trampling mass the officer poured his light without pity and without cessation. Caught in the current, Helberson and Harper were swept out of the room and cascaded down the stairs into the street.

"Good God, doctor! did I not tell you that Jarette would kill him?" said Harper, as soon as they were clear of the crowd.

"I believe you did," replied the other without apparent emotion.

They walked on in silence, block after block. Against the greying east the dwellings of our hill tribes showed in silhouette. The familiar milk-waggon was already astir in the streets; the baker's man would soon come upon the scene; the newspaper carrier was abroad in the land.

"It strikes me, youngster," said Helberson, "that you and I have been having too much of the morning air lately. It is unwholesome; we need a change. What do you say to a tour in Europe?"

"When?"

"I'm not particular. I should suppose that four o'clock this afternoon would be early enough."

"I'll meet you at the boat," said Harper.

V

Seven years afterward these two men sat upon a bench in Madison Square, New York, in familiar conversation. Another man, who had been observing them for some time, himself unobserved, approached and, courteously lifting his hat from locks as white as snow, said: "I beg your pardon, gentlemen, but when you have killed a man by coming to life, it is best to change clothes with him, and at the first opportunity make a break for liberty."

Helberson and Harper exchanged significant glances. They were apparently amused. The former then looked the stranger kindly in the eye, and replied:

"That has always been my plan. I entirely agree with you as to its advant——" He stopped suddenly and grew deathly pale. He stared at the man, open-mouthed; he trembled visibly.

"Ah!" said the stranger, "I see that you are indisposed, doctor. If you cannot treat yourself, Dr. Harper can do something for you, I am sure."

"Who the devil are you?" said Harper bluntly.

The stranger came nearer, and, bending toward them, said in a

whisper: "I call myself Jarette sometimes, but I don't mind telling you, for old friendship, that I am Dr. William Mancher."

The revelation brought both men to their feet. "Mancher!" they cried in a breath; and Helberson added: "It is true, by God!"

"Yes," said the stranger, smiling vaguely, "it is true enough, no doubt."

He hesitated, and seemed to be trying to recall something, then began humming a popular air. He had apparently forgotten their presence.

"Look here, Mancher," said the elder of the two, "tell us just what occurred that night—to Jarette, you know."

"Oh yes, about Jarette," said the other. "It's odd I should have neglected to tell you—I tell it so often. You see I knew, by overhearing him talking to himself, that he was pretty badly frightened. So I couldn't resist the temptation to come to life and have a bit of fun out of him—I couldn't, really. That was all right, though certainly I did not think he would take it so seriously; I did not, truly. And afterward—well, it was a tough job changing places with him, and then—damn you! you didn't let me out!"

Nothing could exceed the ferocity with which these last words were delivered. Both men stepped back in alarm.

"We?—why—why——" Helberson stammered, losing his self-possession utterly, "we had nothing to do with it."

"Didn't I say you were Doctors Hellborn and Sharper?" inquired the lunatic, laughing.

"My name is Helberson, yes; and this gentleman is Mr. Harper." replied the former, reassured. "But we are not physicians now; we are—well, hang it, old man, we are gamblers."

And that was the truth.

"A very good profession—very good, indeed; and, by the way, I hope Sharper here paid over Jarette's money like an honest stakeholder. A very good and honourable profession," he repeated, thoughtfully, moving carelessly away; "but I stick to the old one. I am High Supreme Medical Officer of the Bloomingdale Asylum; it is my duty to cure the superintendent."

HENRY JAMES
1843–1916

THE TREE OF KNOWLEDGE

I

It was one of the secret opinions, such as we all have, of Peter Brench that his main success in life would have consisted in his never having committed himself about the work, as it was called, of his friend, Morgan Mallow. This was a subject on which it was, to the best of his belief, impossible, with veracity, to quote him, and it was nowhere on record that he had, in the connection, on any occasion and in any embarrassment, either lied or spoken the truth. Such a triumph had its honour even for a man of other triumphs—a man who had reached fifty, who had escaped marriage, who had lived within his means, who had been in love with Mrs. Mallow for years without breathing it, and who, last not least, had judged himself once for all. He had so judged himself in fact that he felt an extreme and general humility to be his proper portion; yet there was nothing that made him think so well of his parts as the course he had steered so often through the shallows just mentioned. It became thus a real wonder that the friends in whom he had most confidence were just those with whom he had most reserves. He couldn't tell Mrs. Mallow—or at least he supposed, excellent man, he couldn't—that she was the one beautiful reason he had never married; any more than he could tell her husband that the sight of the multiplied marbles in that gentleman's studio was an affliction of which even time had never blunted the edge. His victory, however, as I have intimated, in regard to these productions, was not simply in his not having let it out that he deplored them; it was, remarkably, in his not having kept it in by anything else.

The whole situation, among these good people, was verily a marvel, and there was probably not such another for a long way from the spot that engages us—the point at which the soft declivity of Hampstead began at that time to confess in broken accents to St. John's Wood. He despised Mallow's statues and adored Mallow's wife, and yet was distinctly fond of Mallow, to whom, in turn, he was equally dear. Mrs. Mallow rejoiced in the statues—though she

preferred, when pressed, the busts ; and if she was visibly attached to Peter Brench it was because of his affection for Morgan. Each loved the other, moreover, for the love borne in each case to Lancelot, whom the Mallows respectively cherished as their only child and whom the friend of their fireside identified as the third, but decidedly the handsomest, of his godsons. Already in the old years it had come to that—that no one, for such a relation, could possibly have occurred to any of them, even to the baby itself, but Peter. There was luckily a certain independence, of the pecuniary sort, all round ; the Master could never otherwise have spent his solemn *Wanderjahre* in Florence and Rome and continued, by the Thames as well as by the Arno and the Tiber, to add unpurchased group to group and model, for what was too apt to prove in the event mere love, fancy-heads of celebrities either too busy or too buried—too much of the age or too little of it—to sit. Neither could Peter, lounging in almost daily, have found time to keep the whole complicated tradition so alive by his presence. He was massive, but mild, the depositary of these mysteries—large and loose and ruddy and curly, with deep tones, deep eyes, deep pockets, to say nothing of the habit of long pipes, soft hats and brownish, greyish, weather-faded clothes, apparently always the same.

He had " written," it was known, but had never spoken—never spoken, in particular, of that ; and he had the air (since, as was believed, he continued to write) of keeping it up in order to have something more—as if he had not, at the worst, enough—to be silent about. Whatever his air, at any rate, Peter's occasional unmentioned prose and verse were quite truly the result of an impulse to maintain the purity of his taste by establishing still more firmly the right relation of fame to feebleness. The little green door of his domain was in a garden-wall on which the stucco was cracked and stained, and in the small detached villa behind it everything was old, the furniture, the servants, the books, the prints, the habits and the new improvements. The Mallows, at Carrara Lodge, were within ten minutes, and the studio there was on their little land, to which they had added, in their happy faith, to build it. This was the good fortune, if it was not the ill, of her having brought him, in marriage, a portion that put them in a manner at their ease and enabled them thus, on their side, to keep it up. And they did keep it up—they always had—the infatuated sculptor and his wife, for whom Nature had refined on the impossible by relieving them of the sense of the difficult. Morgan had, at all events, everything of the sculptor but the spirit of Phidias—the brown velvet, the becoming *beretto*, the " plastic " presence, the fine fingers, the beautiful accent in Italian, and the old Italian factotum. He seemed to make up for everything when he addressed Egidio with the " tu " and waved him to turn one of the rotary pedestals of which the place was full. They were tremendous

Italians at Carrara Lodge, and the secret of the part played by this fact in Peter's life was, in a large degree, that it gave him, sturdy Briton that he was, just the amount of "going abroad" he could bear. The Mallows were all his Italy, but it was in a measure for Italy he liked them. His one worry was that Lance—to which they had shortened his godson—was, in spite of a public school, perhaps a shade too Italian. Morgan, meanwhile, looked like somebody's flattering idea of somebody's own person as expressed in the great room provided at the Uffizzi Museum for Portraits of Artists by Themselves. The Master's sole regret that he had not been born rather to the brush than to the chisel sprang from his wish that he might have contributed to that collection.

It appeared, with time, at any rate, to be to the brush that Lance had been born; for Mrs. Mallow, one day when the boy was turning twenty, broke it to their friend, who shared, to the last delicate morsel, their problems and pains, that it seemed as if nothing would really do but that he should embrace the career. It had been impossible longer to remain blind to the fact that he gained no glory at Cambridge, where Brench's own college had, for a year, tempered its tone to him as for Brench's own sake. Therefore why renew the vain form of preparing him for the impossible? The impossible—it had become clear—was that he should be anything but an artist.

"Oh dear, dear!" said poor Peter.

"Don't you believe in it?" asked Mrs. Mallow, who still, at more than forty, had her violet velvet eyes, her creamy satin skin, and her silken chestnut hair.

"Believe in what?"

"Why, in Lance's passion."

"I don't know what you mean by 'believing in it.' I've never been unaware, certainly, of his disposition, from his earliest time, to daub and draw; but I confess I've hoped it would burn out."

"But why should it," she sweetly smiled, "with his wonderful heredity? Passion is passion—though of course, indeed, you, dear Peter, know nothing of that. Has the Master's ever burned out?"

Peter looked off a little and, in his familiar, formless way, kept up for a moment a sound between a smothered whistle and a subdued hum. "Do you think he's going to be another Master?"

She seemed scarce prepared to go that length, yet she had, on the whole, a most marvellous trust. "I know what you mean by that. Will it be a career to incur jealousies and provoke the machinations that have been at times almost too much for his father? Well—say it may be, since nothing but clap-trap, in these dreadful days, *can*, it would seem, make its way, and since, with the curse of refinement and distinction, one may easily find one's self begging one's bread. Put it at the worst—say he *has* the misfortune to wing his flight further than the vulgar taste of his stupid countrymen can

follow. Think, all the same, of the happiness—the same that the Master has had. He'll *know*."

Peter looked rueful. "Ah, but *what* will he know?"

"Quiet joy!" cried Mrs. Mallow, quite impatient and turning away.

II

He had, of course, before long, to meet the boy himself on it and hear that, practically, everything was settled. Lance was not to go up again, but to go instead to Paris, where, since the die was cast, he would find the best advantages. Peter had always felt that he must be taken as he was, but had never perhaps found him so much as he was on this occasion. "You chuck Cambridge then altogether? Doesn't that seem rather a pity?"

Lance would have been like his father, to his friend's sense, had he had less humour, and like his mother had he had more beauty. Yet it was a good middle way, for Peter, that, in the modern manner, he was, to the eye, rather the young stockbroker than the young artist. The youth reasoned that it was a question of time—there was such a mill to go through, such an awful lot to learn. He had talked with fellows and had judged. "One has got to-day," he said, "don't you see? to know."

His interlocutor, at this, gave a groan. "Oh, hang it, *don't* know!"

Lance wondered. "'Don't'? Then what's the use——?"

"The use of what?"

"Why, of anything. Don't you think I've talent?"

Peter smoked away, for a little, in silence; then went on: "It isn't knowledge, it's ignorance that—as we've been beautifully told—is bliss."

"Don't you think I have talent?" Lance repeated.

Peter, with his trick of queer, kind demonstrations, passed his arm round his godson and held him a moment. "How do I know?"

"Oh" said the boy, "if it's your own ignorance you're defending——!"

Again, for a pause, on the sofa, his godfather smoked. "It isn't. I've the misfortune to be omniscient."

"Oh well," Lance laughed again, "if you know *too* much——!"

"That's what I do, and why I'm so wretched."

Lance's gaiety grew. "Wretched? Come, I say!"

"But I forgot," his companion went on, "you're not to know about that. It would indeed, for you too, make the too much. Only I'll tell you what I'll do." And Peter got up from the sofa. "If you'll go up again, I'll pay your way at Cambridge."

Lance stared, a little rueful in spite of being still amused. "Oh, Peter! You disapprove so of Paris?"

"Well, I'm afraid of it."

"Ah, I see."

"No, you don't see—yet. But you will—that is, you would. And you mustn't."

The young man thought more gravely. "But one's innocence, already——"

"Is considerably damaged? Ah, that won't matter," Peter persisted—"we'll patch it up here."

"Here? Then you want me to stay at home?"

Peter almost confessed to it. "Well, we're so right—we four together—just as we are. We're so safe. Come don't spoil it."

The boy, who had turned to gravity, turned from this, on the real pressure of his friend's tone, to consternation. "Then what's a fellow to be?"

"My particular care. Come, old man"—and Peter now fairly pleaded—"*I'll* look out for you."

Lance, who had remained on the sofa with his legs out and his hands in his pockets, watched him with eyes that showed suspicion. Then he got up. "You think there's something the matter with me—that I can't make a success."

"Well, what do you call a success?"

Lance thought again. "Why, the best sort, I suppose, is to please one's self. Isn't that the sort that, in spite of cabals and things, is, in his own peculiar line, the Master's?"

There were so much too many things in this question to be answered at once that they practically checked the discussion, which became particularly difficult in the light of such renewed proof that, though the young man's innocence might, in the course of his studies, as he contended, somewhat have shrunken, the finer essence of it still remained. That was indeed exactly what Peter had assumed and what, above all, he desired; yet, perversely enough, it gave him a chill. The boy believed in the cabals and things believed in the peculiar line, believed, in short, in the Master. What happened a month or two later was not that he went up again at the expense of his godfather, but that a fortnight after he had got settled in Paris this personage sent him fifty pounds.

He had meanwhile, at home, this personage, made up his mind to the worst; and what it might be had never yet grown quite so vivid to him as when, on his presenting himself one Sunday night, as he never failed to do, for supper, the mistress of Carrara Lodge met him with an appeal as to—of all things in the world—the wealth of the Canadians. She was earnest, she was even excited. "Are many of them *really* rich?"

He had to confess that he knew nothing about them, but he often thought afterwards of that evening. The room in which they sat was adorned with sundry specimens of the Master's genius, which had the merit of being, as Mrs. Mallow herself frequently suggested, of an unusually convenient size. They were indeed of dimensions

not customary in the products of the chisel and had the singularity that, if the objects and features intended to be small looked too large, the objects and features intended to be large looked too small. The Master's intention, whether in respect to this matter or to any other, had, in almost any case, even after years, remained undiscoverable to Peter Brench. The creations that so failed to reveal it stood about on pedestals and brackets, on tables and shelves, a little staring white population, heroic, idyllic, allegoric, mythic, symbolic, in which "scale" has so strayed and lost itself that the public square and the chimney-piece seemed to have changed places, the monumental being all diminutive and the diminutive all monumental; branches, at any rate, markedly, of a family in which stature was rather oddly irrespective of function, age, and sex. They formed, like the Mallows themselves, poor Brench's own family—having at least, to such a degree, the note of familiarity. The occasion was one of those he had long ago learnt to know and to name—short flickers of the faint flame, soft gusts of a kinder air. Twice a year, regularly, the Master believed in his fortune, in addition to believing all the year round in his genius. This time it was to be made by a bereaved couple from Toronto, who had given him the handsomest order for a tomb to three lost children, each of whom they desired to be, in the composition, emblematically and characteristically represented.

Such was naturally the moral of Mrs. Mallow's question: if their wealth was to be assumed, it was clear, from the nature of their admiration, as well as from mysterious hints thrown out (they were a little odd!) as to other possibilities of the same mortuary sort, that their further patronage might be; and not less evident that, should the Master become at all known in those climes, nothing would be more inevitable than a run of Canadian custom. Peter had been present before at runs of custom, colonial and domestic—present at each of those of which the aggregation had left so few gaps in the marble company round him; but it was his habit never, at these junctures, to prick the bubble in advance. The fond illusion, while it lasted, eased the wound of elections never won, the long ache of medals and diplomas carried off, on every chance, by every one but the Master; it lighted the lamp, moreover, that would glimmer through the next eclipse. They lived, however, after all—as it was always beautiful to see—at a height scarce susceptible of ups and downs. They strained a point, at times, charmingly, to admit that the public was here and there, not too bad to buy; but they would have been nowhere without their attitude that the Master was always too good to sell. They were, at all events, deliciously formed, Peter often said to himself, for their fate; the Master had a vanity, his wife had loyalty, of which success, depriving these things of innocence, would have diminished the merit and the grace. Any one could be charming under a

charm, and, as he looked about him at a world of prosperity more void of proportion even than the Master's museum, he wondered if he knew another pair that so completely escaped vulgarity.

"What a pity Lance isn't with us to rejoice!" Mrs. Mallow on this occasion sighed at supper.

"We'll drink to the health of the absent," her husband replied, filling his friend's glass and his own and giving a drop to their companion; "but we must hope that he's preparing himself for a happiness much less like this of ours this evening—excusable as I grant it to be—than like the comfort we have always—whatever has happened or has not happened—been able to trust ourselves to enjoy. The comfort," the Master explained, leaning back in the pleasant lamplight and firelight, holding up his glass and looking round at his marble family, quartered more or less, a monstrous brood, in every room—"the comfort of art in itself!"

Peter looked a little shyly at his wine. "Well—I don't care what you may call it, a fellow doesn't—but Lance must learn to *sell*, you know. I drink to his acquisition of the secret of a base popularity!"

"Oh, yes, *he* must sell," the boy's mother, who was still more, however, this seemed to give out, the Master's wife, rather artlessly conceded.

"Oh," the sculptor, after a moment, confidently pronounced, "Lance *will*. Don't be afraid. He will have learnt."

"Which is exactly what Peter," Mrs. Mallow gaily returned—"why in the world were you so perverse, Peter?—wouldn't, when he told him, hear of."

Peter, when this lady looked at him, with accusatory affection—a grace, on her part, not infrequent—could never find a word; but the Master, who was always all amenity and tact, helped him out now as he had often helped him before. "That's his old idea, you know—on which we've so often differed; his theory that the artist should be all impulse and instinct. *I* go in, of course, for a certain amount of school. Not too much, but a due proportion. There's where his protest came in," he continued to explain to his wife, "as against what *might*, don't you see? be in question for Lance."

"Ah, well"—and Mrs. Mallow turned the violet eyes across the table at the subject of this discourse—"he's sure to have meant, of course, nothing but good; but that wouldn't have prevented him, if Lance *had* taken his advice from being, in effect, horribly cruel."

They had a sociable way of talking of him to his face as if he had been in the clay or—at most—in the plaster, and the Master was unfailingly generous. He might have been waving Egidio to make him revolve. "Ah, but poor Peter was not so wrong as to what it may, after all, come to that he *will* learn."

"Oh, but nothing artistically bad," she urged—still, for poor Peter, arch and dewy.

" Why, just the little French tricks," said the Master : on which their friend had to pretend to admit, when pressed by Mrs. Mallow, that these aesthetic vices had been the objects of his dread.

III

" I know now," Lance said to him the next year, " why you were so much against it," He had come back, supposedly for a mere interval, and was looking about him at Carrara Lodge, where indeed he had already, on two or three occasions, since his expatriation, briefly appeared. This had the air of a longer holiday. " Something rather awful has happened to me. It *isn't* so very good to know."

" I'm bound to say high spirits don't show in your face," Peter was rather ruefully forced to confess. " Still, are you very sure you do know ? "

" Well, I at least know as much as I can bear." These remarks were exchanged in Peter's den, and the young man, smoking cigarettes, stood before the fire with his back against the mantel. Something of his bloom seemed really to have left him.

Poor Peter wondered. " You're clear then as to what in particular I wanted you not to go for ? "

" In particular ? " Lance thought. " It seems to me that, in particular, there can have been but one thing."

They stood for a little sounding each other. " Are you quite sure ? "

" Quite sure I'm a beastly duffer ? Quite—by this time."

" Oh ! "—and Peter turned away as if almost with relief.

" It's *that* that isn't pleasant to find out."

" Oh, I don't care for ' that,' " said Peter, presently coming round again. " I mean I personally don't."

" Yet I hope you can understand a little that I myself should ! "

" Well, what do you mean by it ? " Peter sceptically asked.

And on this Lance had to explain—how the upshot of his studies in Paris had inexorably proved a mere deep doubt of his means. These studies had waked him up, and a new light was in his eyes ; but what the new light did was really to show him too much. " Do you know what's the matter with me ? I'm too horribly intelligent. Paris was really the last place for me. I've learnt what I can't do."

Poor Peter stared—it was a staggerer ; but even after they had had, on the subject, a longish talk in which the boy brought out to the full the hard truth of his lesson, his friend betrayed less pleasure than usually breaks into a face to the happy tune of " I told you so ! " Poor Peter himself made now indeed so little a point of having told him so that Lance broke ground in a different place a day or two after. " What was it then that—before I went—you

were afraid I should find out?" This, however, Peter refused to tell him, on the ground that if he hadn't yet guessed perhaps he never would, and that nothing at all, for either of them, in any case, was to be gained by giving the thing a name. Lance eyed him, on this, an instant, with the bold curiosity of youth—with the air indeed of having in his mind two or three names, of which one or other would be right. Peter, nevertheless, turning his back again, offered no encouragement, and when they parted afresh it was with some show of impatience on the side of the boy. Accordingly, at their next encounter, Peter saw at a glance that he had now, in the interval, divined and that, to sound his note, he was only waiting till they should find themselves alone. This he had soon arranged, and he then broke straight out. "Do you know your conundrum has been keeping me awake? But in the watches of the night the answer came over me—so that, upon my honour, I quite laughed out. Had you been supposing I had to go to Paris to learn *that*?" Even now, to see him still so sublimely on his guard, Peter's young friend had to laugh afresh. "You won't give a sign till you're sure? Beautiful old Peter!" But Lance at last produced it. "Why, hang it, the truth about the Master."

It made between them, for some minutes, a lively passage, full of wonder, for each, at the wonder of the other. "Then how long have you understood—"

"The true value of his work? I understood it," Lance recalled, "as soon as I began to understand anything. But I didn't begin fully to do that, I admit, till I got *là-bas*."

"Dear, dear!"—Peter gasped with retrospective dread.

"But for what have you taken me? I'm a hopeless muff—that I *had* to have rubbed in. But I'm not such a muff as the Master!" Lance declared.

"Then why did you never tell me——?"

"That I hadn't, after all"—the boy took him up—"remained such an idiot? Just because I never dreamed *you* knew. But I beg your pardon. I only wanted to spare you. And what I don't now understand is how the deuce then, for so long, you've managed to keep bottled."

Peter produced his explanation, but only after some delay and with a gravity not void of embarrassment. "It was for your mother."

"Oh!" said Lance.

"And that's the great thing now—since the murder *is* out. I want a promise from you. I mean"—and Peter almost feverishly followed it up—"a vow from you, solemn and such as you owe me, here on the spot, that you'll sacrifice anything rather than let her ever guess——"

"That *I've* guessed?"—Lance took it in. "I see." He evidently, after a moment, had taken in much. "But what is it you

have in mind that I may have a chance to sacrifice ? "

" Oh, one has always something."

Lance looked at him hard. " Do you mean that *you've* ha ——— ? " The look he received back, however, so put the question by that he found soon enough another. " Are you really sure my mother doesn't know ? "

Peter, after renewed reflection, was really sure. " If she does, she's too wonderful."

" But aren't we all too wonderful ? "

" Yes," Peter granted—" but in different ways. The thing's so desperately important because your father's little public consists only, as you know then," Peter developed—" well, of how many ? "

" First of all," the Master's son risked, " of himself. And last of all too. I don't quite see of whom else."

Peter had an approach to impatience. " Of your mother, I say—*always*."

Lance cast it all up. " You absolutely feel that ? "

" Absolutely."

" Well, then, with yourself, that makes three."

" Oh, *me* ! " and Peter, with a wag of his kind old head, modestly excused himself. " The number is, at any rate, small enough for any individual dropping out to be too dreadfully missed. Therefore, to put it in a nutshell, take care, my boy—that's all—that *you're* not ! "

" I've got to keep on humbugging ? " Lance sighed.

" It's just to warn you of the danger of your failing of that that I've seized this opportunity."

" And what do you regard in particular," the young man asked, " as the danger ? "

" Why, this certainty ; that the moment your mother, who feels so strongly, should suspect your secret—well," said Peter desperately, " the fat would be on the fire."

Lance, for a moment, seemed to stare at the blaze. " She'd throw me over ? "

" She'd throw *him* over."

" And come round to us ? "

Peter, before he answered, turned away. " Come round to *you*." But he had said enough to indicate—and, as he evidently trusted, to avert—the horrid contingency.

IV

Within six months again, however, his fear was, on more occasions than one, all before him. Lance had returned to Paris, to another trial ; then had reappeared at home and had had, with his father, for the first time in his life, one of the scenes that strike sparks. He described it with much expression to Peter, as to

whom—since they had never done so before—it was a sign of a new reserve on the part of the pair at Carrara Lodge that they at present failed, on a matter of intimate interest, to open themselves—if not in joy, then in sorrow—to their good friend. This produced perhaps, practically, between the parties, a shade of alienation and a slight intermission of commerce—marked mainly indeed by the fact that, to talk at his ease with his old playmate, Lance had, in general, to come to see him. The closest, if not quite the gayest relation they had yet known together was thus ushered in.

The difficulty for poor Lance was a tension at home, begotten by the fact that his father wished him to be, at least the sort of success he himself had been. He hadn't "chucked" Paris—though nothing appeared more vivid to him than that Paris had chucked him; he would go back again because of the fascination in trying, in seeing, in sounding the depths—in learning one's lesson, in fine, even if the lesson were simply that of one's impotence in the presence of one's larger vision. But what did the Master, all aloft in his senseless fluency, know of impotence, and what vision—to be called such—had he, in all his blind life, ever had? Lance, heated and indignant, frankly appealed to his godparent on this score.

His father, it appeared, had come down on him for having, after so long, nothing to show, and hoped that, on his next return, this deficiency would be repaired. *The* thing the Master complacently set forth was—for any artist, however inferior to himself—at least to "do" something. "What can you do? That's all I ask!" *He* had certainly done enough, and there was no mistake about what he had to show. Lance had tears in his eyes when it came thus to letting his old friend know how great the strain might be on the "sacrifice" asked of him. It wasn't so easy to continue humbugging—as from son to parent—after feeling one's self despised for not grovelling in mediocrity. Yet a noble duplicity was what, as they intimately faced the situation, Peter went on requiring; and it was still, for a time, what his young friend, bitter and sore, managed loyally to comfort him with. Fifty pounds more than once again, it was true, rewarded, both in London and in Paris, the young friend's loyalty; none the less sensibly, doubtless, at the moment, that the money was a direct advance on a decent sum for which Peter had long since privately pre-arranged an ultimate function. Whether by these arts or others, at all events, Lance's just resentment was kept for a season—but only for a season—at bay. The day arrived when he warned his companion that he could hold out—or hold in—no longer. Carrara Lodge had had to listen to another lecture delivered from a great height—an infliction really heavier, at last, than, without striking back or in some way letting the Master have the truth, flesh and blood could bear.

"And what I don't see is," Lance observed with a certain

irritated eye for what was, after all, if it came to that, due to himself too—" What I don't see is, upon my honour, how *you*, as things are going, can keep the game up."

" Oh, the game for me is only to hold my tongue," said placid Peter. " And I have my reason."

" Still my mother ? "

Peter showed, as he had often shown it before—that is by turning it straight away—a queer face. " What will you have ? I haven't ceased to like her."

She's beautiful—she's a dear, of course," Lance granted ; but what is she to you, after all, and what is it to you that, as to anything whatever, she should or she shouldn't ? "

Peter, who had turned red, hung fire a little. Well—it's all, simply, what I make of it."

There was now, however, in his young friend, a strange, an adopted, insistence. " What are you, after all, to *her* ? "

" Oh, nothing. But that's another matter."

" She cares only for my father," said Lance the Parisian.

" Naturally—and that's just why."

" Why you've wished to spare her ? "

" Because she cares so tremendously much."

Lance took a turn about the room, but with his eyes still on his host. " How awfully—always—you must have liked her ! "

" Awfully. Always," said Peter Brench.

The young man continued for a moment to muse—then stopped again in front of him. " Do you know how much she cares ? " Their eyes met on it, but Peter, as if his own found something new in Lance's, appeared to hesitate, for the first time for so long, to say he did know. " *I've* only just found out," said Lance. " She came to my room last night, after being present, in silence and only with her eyes on me, at what I had had to take from him ; she came—and she was with me an extraordinary hour."

He paused again, and they had again for a while sounded each other. Then something—and it made him suddenly turn pale—came to Peter. " She *does* know ? "

" She does know. She let it all out to me—so as to demand of me no more than that, as she said, of which she herself had been capable. She has always, always known," said Lance without pity.

Peter was silent a long time ; during which his companion might have heard him gently breathe and, on touching him, might have felt within him the vibration of a long, low sound suppressed. By the time he spoke, at last, he had taken everything in. " Then I do see how tremendously much."

" Isn't it wonderful ? " Lance asked.

" Wonderful," Peter mused.

" So that if your original effort to keep me from Paris was to keep

me from knowledge——!" Lance exclaimed as if with a sufficient indication of his futility.

It might have been at the futility that Peter appeared for a little to gaze. "I think it must have been—without my quite at the time knowing it—to keep *me*!" he replied at last as he turned away.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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In arrangement with whom the late W. J. Stillman's famous story "Billy and Hans," which has been widely circulated by them for the benefit of the S.P.C.A., is here reprinted.

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For their courtesy in allowing us to include "The Tree of Knowledge," from *The Soft Side,* by the late Henry James, the author himself having approved of a selection from his work two years before his death.

XVI
AMERICAN

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AMERICAN STORY-TELLERS

The Moderns and "O. Henry"

To the reader of this volume of the world's best short stories—those written by American authors born during the second half of the nineteenth century—one very noticeable feature will be the range and change in the method of the story-tellers. In the opening stories we find that blending of the sentimental and the humorous which may be held to be the expression of Victorian humanitarianism. The term Victorian is not altogether out of place here, for, apart from deviations into dialect and similar emphasis of what a decade or two ago was denominated "local colour," essentially a great part of the American output of fiction was a contribution to English literature. Before we reach the end, however, we find the American short story becoming the expression of something racily indigenous.

In the earlier periods, Edgar Allan Poe, Bret Harte, and Ambrose Bierce, the first two of world-wide repute, the third even yet short of his due meed of popular fame, stood out as masters in the special art of short-story telling. In this later period, among all the varied excellences displayed in the fifty-four stories by thirty-eight writers, easily and unchallengeably first stands the work signed by the simple pen-name of "O. Henry."

G. W. CABLE—E. S. PHELPS

In the opening story, "'Sieur George," we get a picture tenderly and sympathetically rendered by George W. Cable (1844–1925) of old-time life in New Orleans, and more especially of the poor, ineffective old man who has ruined others as well as himself in wild attempts at grasping fortune through the medium of lottery tickets. In "Posson Jone'" we have something of the same tenderness combined with droll humour in the contrast between the elegant little city Creole and the naïve country parson, with surprise in the way in which the latter recovers his money. Elizabeth Stuart Phelps (1844–1911) was one of the most popular writers of her generation, and "Little Tommy Tucker" well represents her power of combining the sentimental with the dramatic.

As writer of *An Old Sailor's Yarns* Captain Roland Coffin proved himself an adept at the spinning of salt-water yarns, and "How Old Wiggins Wore Ship" is a capital rendering of the old idea of the ruling passion being strong in death, a vivid page from the history of the olden cross-Atlantic sailing ships. Captain Coffin appears out of chronological order, the period of his writing being ascertained when the Library was in process of compilation, but the date of his birth (1826) was only found when the sheets had gone to press.

STANLEY WATERLOO—CHANDLER HARRIS

A remarkable contrast is afforded by the next story, "An Ulm," in which Stanley Waterloo (1846–1913) tells with vivid intensity the way in which a dog was trained to murder the man with whom its trainer's wife was philandering. With the work of Joel Chandler Harris (1848–1908) we reach one of the classics of American fiction in the short story form, for his tales of quaint nigger lore associated with the name of his supposed narrator, Uncle Remus, are marked by an individuality and drollery that are all their own. The two stories here given, "Brer Rabbit's Cradle" and "Brer Rabbit and the Tar-Baby," are among the most delicious instances of the way in which the seemingly simple Brer Rabbit always overreaches and outdoes his cunning neighbours.

The negro has provided the American story-teller with great variety of material, and Mrs. Katherine Sherwood Bonner McDowell (1849–1883), whose life was too short fully to develop her excellent gifts as narrator, tells a quaint tale in her account of "Hieronymus Pop and the Baby," and tells it with an engaging touch of humour. It is interesting to note that Mrs. McDowell acted for some years as secretary to Henry Wadsworth Longfellow.

LAFCADIO HEARN

Lafcadio Hearn (1850–1904) was a writer whose memory is closely associated with his long sojourn in Japan, and with his books especially devoted to that land. He was of mixed Irish-Greek parentage, and finds his place among American writers because it was in America that he passed the longest period of his wandering life and there established himself as a writer. His skill is well represented here in "The Soul of the Great Bell," a Chinese story of self-sacrifice that has parallels in the folk-tales of many lands.

MARY S. CUTTING—ROBERT GRANT

It is still the touch of a sweet and pleasant sentiment which is found in the work of Mary Stewart Cutting (1851–1924), whose story "The Happiest Time" delicately traverses the common belief or assumption that such a time is the period during which a young couple are engaged. The contrast between the happy married pair and the young couple made miserable by imaginary grievances is very subtly indicated in a simple and effective tale. Robert Grant (b. 1852) is represented by a story, "Against his Judgment," which skilfully shows that a man's

considered views do not necessarily govern his actions, that impulse is likely to act on a certain line transcending any result of the balancing of pros and cons by reason.

NELSON PAGE

Thomas Nelson Page (1853–1922) established his reputation as a master of the short story with his volume of negro tales, *In Ole Virginia*, which was happily summed up as being "a series of black classics, wherein the colour is an accident, the soul human and universal." How true this is, is well shown in the story which is given here. "Ole 'Stracted," the solitary nigger who lives on in the faith of seeing the master from whom he had been sold, the wife and child from whom he had been separated, is a pathetic and beautiful figure, and his faith is in part justified by the dramatic discovery as he is dying that his nearest neighbours and only friends are the longed-for son and his family.

H. C. BUNNER

As novelist, humorist, and verse-writer as well as writer of short stories, Henry Cuyler Bunner (1855–1896) established a reputation during the last dozen years of his life. His mastery of the art of the short story irradiated by humour is admirably illustrated in the first of his stories here given. "The Nice People" is indeed a delicious piece of comedy consequent upon a newly-wedded couple determining to pass themselves off on the honeymoon-trip as a staid and experienced married pair. It affords a "situation" out of which rapidly develop complications that lead to a doubt whether the couple are married at all, and the new Adam and Eve are only saved from expulsion from their hotel-Eden by the involuntary display of evidence which convert melancholy into hilarity. In "A Letter and a Paragraph" the same author is seen to advantage in that more serious vein which is part of the make-up of every true humorist.

F. J. STIMSON—HAROLD FREDERIC

Among the distinguished lawyers who have won also to notable positions in the literary field is Frederic Jesup Stimson (b. 1855), whose novels and stories have met with cordial appreciation in America. In "Mrs. Knollys" he has made romantic and effective use of the theory of the movement of glaciers, in the tragic tale of a young couple whose married life is broken by the bridegroom's fall into a crevasse in the Carinthian Alps. It is a pathetic story told with simplicity and restraint, and one that shows the author's skill as narrator, for we read it as an actual chronicle rather than with any feeling that it is merely fiction. Something of the same sense of reality pervades the remarkable story of "Brother Sebastian's Friendship," by Harold Frederic (1856–1898). The writer of this story was already well known as a journalist when he published some notable novels and a series of striking short stories, of which this is finely representative. "Brother Sebastian's Friendship," in the intensity of its theme and the reticence of its telling, may indeed be regarded as something of a model of story-telling art. We finish it with the feeling that the narrator, Brother

Sebastian, has himself told the strange story with its striking *dénouement*, that he has conveyed to us the actual feelings of the solitary to whom befell such a remarkable experience.

GERTRUDE ATHERTON

With "The Greatest Good for the Greatest Number," by Gertrude Atherton (b. 1857), we reach a short story by a writer best known as the author of full-length novels. In this problem set in short story form, she shows how well she could also utilise the briefer kind of fiction. Wholly dissimilar as the stories are in treatment, the problem which faces the doctor in this tale is precisely that which had been discussed by the hero of Robert Grant's "Against his Judgment," who decided that a man did wrong in saving a strange child's life at the cost of his own, seeing that his death left his own family helpless. So in this story the doctor who could save a cocaine victim's life refrains from doing so in the interests of the victim's family. In the one case a man's judgment concerning the act of another is reversed by his own spontaneous act on a similar occasion arising, in the other the doctor reverses all professional tradition by deciding to withhold the drug which might have saved a life; and considerable skill is evinced in presenting the mental struggle which culminates in his decision.

EDGAR SALTUS—HENRY HARLAND

Another kind of problem is that which is represented in the next story of this volume—and another problem of a kind such as came up for discussion in fiction and elsewhere towards the close of the last century. In "A Maid of Modern Athens"—the Modern Athens of the American author being Boston—Edgar Everton Saltus (1855–1924) was concerned with the inadequate knowledge of each other possessed by the average man and woman before marriage, and with the way in which one young woman dealt with the problem by which she was confronted. Though more of a novelist than a short-story writer the author proved himself a skilful handler of the briefer form of fiction. The position of Henry Harland (1861–1905) in later nineteenth-century letters is especially interesting in that he was established as an American novelist (under the pen-name of "Sidney Luska") and journalist when he gained a fresh literary reputation in London as editor of *The Yellow Book*, which did much to encourage the vogue of the short story of special literary distinction. His own work, marked by picturesqueness of style and frequently by a graceful humour, is well represented here by "A Broken Looking-Glass."

MARY E. WILKINS—EDITH WHARTON

The short New England stories and sketches of character associated with the name of Mary E. Wilkins (Mrs. Freeman) (1862–1930) appear to mark a definite epoch in the development of the American short story. It was something of a new kind of realism which the writer was able to represent, a realism that impressed upon the reader the actualities of people and places and at the same time gave them with a sense of "atmosphere," and revealed in remarkable fashion the individual idiosyncrasies of seemingly everyday folks. "A Far-Away

Melody" is thoroughly representative of this writer's choice of theme and careful and impressive treatment. Mary E. Wilkins may be regarded as a writer who excelled especially in the short story, while in "The Moving Finger," by Edith Wharton (b. 1862), we reach a further example of a novelist's short story. It is a telling and effective romance of a portrait that might interestingly be compared with Oscar Wilde's celebrated story of "The Picture of Dorian Gray."

MARY TRACY EARLE AND RICHARD HARDING DAVIS

Tales of the doings of the Indians are more characteristic of earlier periods of American fiction than of that which is represented in the present volume, yet life on the frontier of civilisation is most impressively employed in "The Indian's Hand," by Lorimer Stoddard (1863–1901). It is a grim and powerful tale of the doings of raiders near the Mexican border and of the intensity of hate of a mother whose boy has been carried off; and it is carried to a tensely terrible conclusion, showing fine tragic power on the part of the writer. In "The Man who worked for Collister," Mary Tracy Earle (b. 1864) shows something of the comedy to be evolved from among the people of a scant and scattered community. It is a story peculiarly American in atmosphere as in action. Novelist, traveller, and war-correspondent, Richard Harding Davis (1864–1916) was also an accomplished artist in the telling of short stories, as is well shown in the two contrasting examples here given, the somewhat uproarious story of "How Hefty Burke got Even" with the police and the simple account of "A Recruit at Christmas."

"O. HENRY"

Except in so far as two or three of them, Joel Chandler Harris, Thomas Nelson Page, and Mary E. Wilkins, for instance, struck new veins in the manner of their interpretation of American life, the story writers so far considered dealt more or less closely with the short story in a way little different from that of English short-story writers on this side of the Atlantic. It was William Sydney Porter (1867–1910) who won to great popularity under his pen-name of "O. Henry" shortly before his early death, who not only pegged out a claim to originality as an American short-story writer, but abundantly proved his title to it. His first published volume, "Cabbages and Kings," one long story, was perhaps the least successful of his works. His great gift was that of short-story writing, and his work in this form is as surprising in its range and fulness as it is in its general excellence and its uniform individuality.

It might indeed be claimed that "O. Henry's" short stories form the most markedly indigenous contribution to literature that has yet been made by America. His sharply rapped-out short sentences, his use of language for which a stickler for "Addisonian English" might reasonably be expected to require glossarial aid, are things that may jar at first, but as we pass from one to another of his stories these are soon overlooked in the growing admiration of the man's sheer gift for story-telling. Here is a writer who within the compass of the short story proves himself a veritable master of the witchery of words, of

words employed not in any sensuous, ear-gratifying order which shall merely emphasise the beauty of sound, but words employed as an artist uses colours to produce something that makes us forget the material of which it was composed. Here, we feel, are chunks, as it were, of American life, from the crowded city or the lone frontier places, romantic, tragic, comic.

If we seek for any unifying characteristic of these stories it is to be found—apart from the individuality displayed in the manner of the telling—in the informing sense of the ironical in the progression of the events. It is not a bitter irony, not even an emphasised irony, but it is implicit in a large proportion of the stories written by a man whose life was itself an instance of the irony of circumstance. So assuredly has "O. Henry" taken his place as the dominating voice of the short story in America during the first decades of the twentieth century, that it was essential that he should be more fully represented than his fellows in a work such as this. The dozen stories here given fully illustrate his seemingly inexhaustible invention, his extraordinary vigour as narrator, and the amazing knowledge of and insight into character of which he gives evidence.

In "The Trimmed Lamp" there is a striking contrast in the presentation of two city work girls, the one flamboyantly out for a good time, and her quiet friend who prefers to work at a lower wage that she may acquire something of refinement from her surroundings. In "The Last of the Troubadours" we pass to the contrasting solitude of ranch life, and in the tragic close of the story of the "troubadour" and his host have a veritable masterpiece of the ironical, while "The Passing of Black Eagle" is a triumphantly successful tale of a tramp who, by dressing the part and possessing the gift of the gab, became leader of a band of desperadoes on the Texan border and then disappeared in the very moment of the great train hold-up which he had engineered. Something of the author's power of the eerie and the grim is shown in "The Furnished Room"; a pleasant humour is disclosed in "The Defeat of the City," with its gentle surprise at the end; while in "The Cop and the Anthem" is rendered with remarkable skill the irony of things, when a man who makes several attempts to ensure imprisonment by breaking the law fails to get arrested and is then "run in" for pausing to listen to an anthem played in a church—an anthem which has touched a chord of memory that has just moved the ne'er-do-weel to resolutions of reformation.

In "The Last Leaf" we have something of the tenderly romantic in the story of the sick woman's fancy that her life will fail with the falling of the last leaf from the tree outside her window. In "The Lost Blend" we pass to an amusing drollery concerning mixed drinks and a pleasant hint of the effect of the "blend," refound, on the tongue of a shy wooer. Another kind of humour is shown in "Vanity and Some Sables," and there is an almost plaintive variation on the theme that things are not what they seem in "Lost on Dress Parade." "Roses, Ruses, and Romance" affords in itself a contrast between the poetic dreamer and his friend the practical man, while the last of the dozen examples by which "O. Henry's" remarkable genius as a short-story writer is here illustrated, "Little Speck in Garnered Fruit," is as

impressive as any of its companions, for vigour of conception and for freshness and terseness of presentation. In all these stories it will be recognised with what remarkable economy of means the writer attains his end not only of holding us entertained but of revealing as well his wide knowledge of and insight into varied human character, normal and abnormal.

J. B. CONNOLLY

Peculiarly notable as an intimate story of the sea is "The Magnetic Hearth," by James B. Connolly (b. 1868), and it is perhaps only the more notable in that highly successful stories of the sea by American writers are by no means numerous. Here the very movement of the returning ship as she presses under every stitch of canvas, homeward bound, seems to be imparted with vividness and vigour by the magic of the author's phrasing. It is a strikingly successful example of the short story that owes its very being to a kind of genius for interpretative description. Another short story of the sea to which the term great might not unfittingly be applied is "The Raft" by Alexander Harvey (b. 1868).

STEPHEN CRANE—SAMUEL HOPKINS ADAMS

Stephen Crane (1870–1900) was a writer who with *The Red Badge of Courage* won a high reputation as a realistic delineator of the horrors of warfare. "The Veteran," the short story by which he is here represented, is a capital instance of his graphic power. Grimly powerful, too, is the story of "The Cat of the Cane-Brake," by Frederick Stuart Greene (b. 1870), rendering as it does the sense of hopelessness of an ill-matched couple dwelling in desolate loneliness.

Great and varied is the gift for drollery possessed by American story-tellers, and though the tale of a blind man does not suggest any possibility of hilarity, "Such as Walk in Darkness," by Samuel Hopkins Adams (b. 1871), is surely provocative of one good laugh. It is a happy example of the story that passes by sudden surprise from the serious to the ludicrous.

JACK LONDON

With Jack London (1876–1916) we reach a story-teller who, though nearly a decade younger than "O. Henry," was already established as a favourite when the older man blazed into fame. Jack London represented in fiction at first the new taste for natural history presented in terms of romance; he wrote of the creatures of the wild in intimate personal fashion, in novels, and in brief tales, but he soon went further afield and with realistic stories now of the Klondyke, and now of the South Seas, proved himself a capital limner of unconventional life. His tale of "The Sickness of Lone Chief" is a triumphant example of the story of great doings given verisimilitude by the natural conditions in which it is supposed to be narrated, while "The Whale Tooth" is scarcely less impressive as a narrative of the struggle between missionary zeal and innate savagery in the early days of the opening up of the Fiji Islands. Whether dealing with the North or South the author is possessed of the true gift of story-telling.

It is a grim memory of the struggle between North and South that affords the motive of "In the Wake of War," by Hallie Erminie Rives (b. 1878). The story renders in skilful fashion the bringing together in after life of two who had met in a horrible episode in the fratricidal struggle. In "The Belled Buzzard," by Irvin S. Cobb (b. 1876), however, the trouble begins immediately after the perpetration of the deed, and events work up rapidly and remorselessly to the dramatic collapse of the culprit. It is a grim story well told that would bear the test of comparison, both in invention and narrative skill, with the work of "O. Henry."

The next one of our stories, "Zelig," by Benjamin Rosenblatt (b. 1880), may be taken here as indicative of something of a change—and not a change for the better—in the American art of short-story telling. The great short-story writers of the West, as represented by such a trio as Bret Harte, Ambrose Bierce, and "O. Henry," had found more or less fresh and characteristic ways of rendering life, romantically, tragically, or humorously, within the limits of brief fiction. In the later part of the period covered by the present volume two new influences seem to be traceable; one, that exercised by immigrants from Eastern Europe and the other that of self-conscious "literary expression." "Zelig" might be one of the grey-toned, hopeless, but powerfully-presented products of Russian literary pessimism, while the succeeding apologue of "The Whale and the Grasshopper," by Seumas O'Brien (b. 1880), is an extremely good instance of the short story as a product of ingenious literary invention.

It is something of a reversion to the type of story in which Mary E. Wilkins excelled that we find in "Ma's Pretties," by Francis Buzzell (b. 1882). "When did you Write your Mother Last?" by Addison Lewis (b. 1889), reveals this younger writer as no mean disciple of the school of "O. Henry," displaying as it does something of that master's utilisation of the irony of circumstance in the posthumous fate of a "good-for-nothing old hobo," who "couldn't quit kiddin' even when he croaked." It is again something of the underworld of a big city's population that is displayed in the next story, "Supers," by Frederick Booth. Still more poignant is "Whose Dog——?" by Francis Gregg, in which, short as it is, the author has told much directly, and indirectly implied much more, in a mere two pages setting forth the fate of the village drunkard. In the last two stories of this volume we are afforded a striking contrast. "Clothes," by Gustav Kobbé, is an effective essay in the sardonic; and with "The End of the Path," by Newbold Noyes, we close on the note of romance admirably handled, and suggesting that with all the changes observable among the American short stories of the first quarter of the twentieth century "old-fashioned" romance may yet continue to hold its place.

W. J.

GEORGE W. CABLE

1844–1925

'SIEUR GEORGE

In the heart of New Orleans stands a large four-story brick building, that has so stood for about three-quarters of a century. Its rooms are rented to a class of persons occupying them simply for lack of activity to find better and cheaper quarters elsewhere. With its grey stucco peeling off in broad patches, it has a solemn look of gentility in rags, and stands, or, as it were, hangs, about the corner of two ancient streets, like a faded fop who pretends to be looking for employment.

Under its main archway is a dingy apothecary shop. On one street is the bazaar of a *modiste en robes et chapeaux* and other humble shops; on the other, the immense batten doors with gratings over the lintels, barred and bolted with masses of cobwebbed iron, like the door of a donjon, are overhung by a creaking sign (left by the sheriff), on which is faintly discernible the mention of wines and liquors. A peep through one of the shops reveals a square court within, hung with many lines of wet clothes, its sides hugged by rotten staircases that seem vainly trying to clamber out of the rubbish.

The neighbourhood is one long since given up to fifth-rate shops, whose masters and mistresses display such enticing mottoes as "*Au gagne petit*!" Innumerable children swarm about, and, by some charm of the place, are not run over, but obstruct the banquettes playing their clamorous games.

The building is a thing of many windows, where passably good-looking women appear and disappear, clad in cotton gowns, watering little outside shelves of flowers and cacti, or hanging canaries' cages. Their husbands are keepers in wine warehouses, rent-collectors for the agents of old Frenchmen who have been laid up to dry in Paris custom-house supernumeraries and court-clerks' deputies (for your second-rate Creole is a great seeker for little offices). A decaying cornice hangs over, dropping bits of mortar on passers below, like a boy at a boarding-house.

The landlord is one Kookoo, an ancient Creole of doubtful purity of blood, who in his landlordly old age takes all suggestions of repairs as personal insults. He was but a stripling when his father

left him this inheritance, and has grown old and wrinkled and brown, a sort of periodically animate mummy, in the business. He smokes cascarilla, wears velveteen, and is as punctual as an executioner.

To Kookoo's venerable property a certain old man used for many years to come every evening, stumbling through the groups of prattling children who frolicked about in the early moonlight—whose name no one knew, but whom all the neighbours designated by the title of 'Sieur George. It was his wont to be seen taking a straight—too straight—course toward his home, never careening to right or left, but now forcing himself slowly forward, as though there were a high gale in front, and now scudding briskly ahead at a ridiculous little dog-trot, as if there were a tornado behind. He would go up the main staircase very carefully, sometimes stopping half-way up for thirty or forty minutes' doze, but getting to the landing eventually, and tramping into his room in the second story, with no little elation to find it still there. Were it not for these slight symptoms of potations, he was such a one as you would pick out of a thousand for a miser. A year or two ago he suddenly disappeared.

A great many years ago, when the old house was still new, a young man with no baggage save a small hair-trunk came and took the room I have mentioned and another adjoining. He supposed he might stay fifty days—and he stayed fifty years and over. This was a very fashionable neighbourhood, and he kept the rooms on that account month after month.

But when he had been here about a year something happened to him—so it was rumoured—that greatly changed the tenor of his life ; and from that time on there began to appear in him and to accumulate upon each other in a manner which became the profound study of Kookoo, the symptoms of a decay, whose cause baffled the landlord's limited powers of conjecture for well-nigh half a century. Hints of a duel, of a reason warped, of disinheritance, and many other unauthorised rumours, fluttered up and floated off, while he became recluse, and, some say, began incidentally to betray the unmanly habit which we have already noticed. His neighbours would have continued neighbourly had he allowed them, but he never let himself be understood, and *les Américaines* are very droll anyhow ; so, as they could do nothing else, they cut him.

So exclusive he became that (though it may have been for economy) he never admitted even a housemaid, but kept his apartments himself. Only the merry serenaders, who in those times used to sing under the balconies, would now and then give him a crumb of their feast for pure fun's sake ; and after a while, because they could not find out his full name, called him, at hazard, George—but always prefixing Monsieur. Afterward, when he began to be careless in his dress, and the fashion of serenading had passed away, the commoner people dared to shorten the title to " 'Sieur George."

Many seasons came and went. The city changed like a growing boy; gentility and fashion went up-town, but 'Sieur George still retained his rooms. Every one knew him slightly, and bowed, but on one seemed to know him well, unless it were a brace or so of those convivial fellows in regulation blue at little Fort St. Charles. He often came home late, with one of these on either arm, all singing different tunes and stopping at every twenty steps to tell secrets. But by-and-by the fort was demolished, church and government property melted down under the warm demand for building-lots, the city spread like a ringworm—and one day 'Sieur George steps out of the old house in full regimentals!

The Creole neighbours rush bareheaded into the middle of the street, as though there were an earthquake or a chimney on fire. What to do or say or think they do not know; they are at their wits' ends, therefore well-nigh happy. However, there is a German blacksmith's shop near by, and they watch to see what *Jacob* will do. Jacob steps into the street with every eye upon him; he approaches Monsieur—he addresses to him a few remarks—they shake hands—they engage in some conversation—Monsieur places his hand on his sword!—now Monsieur passes.

The populace crowd around the blacksmith, children clap their hands softly and jump up and down on tiptoes of expectation—'Sieur George is going to the war in Mexico!

"Ah!" says a little girl in the throng, "'Sieur George's two rooms will be empty; I find that very droll."

The landlord—this same Kookoo—is in the group. He hurls himself into the house and up the stairs. "Fifteen years pass since he have been in those room!" He arrives at the door—it is shut—"It is lock!"

In short, further investigation revealed that a youngish lady in black, who had been seen by several neighbours to enter the house, but had not, of course, been suspected of such remarkable intentions, had, in company with a middle-aged slave-woman, taken these two rooms, and now, at the slightly-opened door, proffered a month's rent in advance. What could a landlord to but smile? Yet there was a pretext left: "the rooms must need repairs?" "No, sir; he could look in and see." Joy! he looked in. All was neatness. The floor unbroken, the walls cracked but a little, and the cracks closed with new plaster, no doubt by the jealous hand of 'Sieur George himself. Kookoo's eyes swept sharply round the two apartments. The furniture was all there. Moreover, there was Monsieur's little hair-trunk. He should not soon forget that trunk. One day, fifteen years or more before, he had taken hold of that trunk to assist Monsieur to arrange his apartment, and Monsieur had drawn his fist back and cried to him to "drop it!" *Mais!* there it was, looking very suspicious in Kookoo's eyes, and the lady's domestic, as tidy as a yellow-bird, went and sat on it.

Could that trunk contain treasure? It might, for Madame wanted to shut the door, and, in fact, did so.

The lady was quite handsome—had been more so, but was still young—spoke the beautiful language, and kept, in the inner room, her discreet and taciturn mulattress, a tall, straight woman, with a fierce eye, but called by the young Creoles of the neighbourhood "confound good-lookin'."

Among *les Américaines*, where the new neighbour always expects to be called upon by the older residents, this lady might have made friends in spite of being as reserved as 'Sieur George; but the reverse being the Creole custom, and she being well pleased to keep her own company, chose mystery rather than society.

The poor landlord was sorely troubled; it must not that anything *de trop* take place in his house. He watched the two rooms narrowly, but without result, save to find that Madame plied her needle for pay, spent her money for little else besides harp-strings, and took good care of the little trunk of Monsieur. This espionage was a good turn to the mistress and maid, for when Kookoo announced that all was proper, no more was said by outsiders. Their landlord never got but one question answered by the middle-aged maid—

"Madame, he feared, was a litt' bit embarrass' *pour* money, eh?"

"Non; Mademoiselle [Mademoiselle, you notice!] had some property, but did not want to eat it up."

Sometimes lady friends came, in very elegant private carriages, to see her, and one or two seemed to beg her—but in vain—to go away with them; but these gradually dropped off, until lady and servant were alone in the world. And so years, and the Mexican war, went by.

The volunteers came home; peace reigned, and the city went on spreading up and down the land; but 'Sieur George did not return. It overran the country like cocoa-grass. Fields, roads, woodlands, that were once 'Sieur George's places of retreat from mankind, were covered all over with little one-story houses in the "Old Third," and fine residences and gardens up in "Lafayette." Streets went slicing, like a butcher's knife, through old colonial estates, whose first masters never dreamed of the city reaching them—and 'Sieur George was still away. The four-story brick got old and ugly, and the surroundings dim and dreamy. Theatres, processions, dry goods stores, government establishments, banks, hotels, and all spirit of enterprise were gone to Canal Street and beyond, and the very beggars were gone with them. The little trunk got very old and bald, and still its owner lingered; still the lady, somewhat the worse for lapse of time, looked from the balcony window in the brief southern twilights, and the maid every morning shook a worn rug or two over the dangerous-looking railing; and yet neither had made friends or enemies.

The two rooms, from having been stingily kept at first, were

needing repairs half the time, and the occupants were often moving, now into one, now back into the other ; yet the hair-trunk was seen only by glimpses, the landlord, to his infinite chagrin, always being a little too late in offering his services, the women, whether it was light or heavy, having already moved it. He thought it significant.

Late one day of a most bitter winter—that season when, to the ecstatic amazement of a whole cityful of children, snow covered the streets ankle deep—there came a soft tap on the corridor door of this pair of rooms. The lady opened it, and beheld a tall, lank, iron-grey man, a total stranger, standing behind—Monsieur George ! Both men were weather-beaten, scarred, and tattered. Across 'Sieur George's crown, leaving a long, bare streak through his white hair, was the souvenir of a Mexican sabre.

The landlord had accompanied them to the door : it was a magnificent opportunity. Mademoiselle asked them all in and tried to furnish a seat to each ; but failing, 'Sieur George went straight across the room and *sat on the hair-trunk*. The action was so conspicuous, the landlord laid it up in his penetrative mind.

'Sieur George was quiet, or, as it appeared, quieted. The mulattress stood near him, and to her he addressed, in an undertone, most of the little he said, leaving Mademoiselle to his companion. The stranger was a warm talker, and seemed to please the lady from the first ; but if he pleased nothing else did. Kookoo, intensely curious, sought some pretext for staying, but found none. They were, altogether, an uncongenial company. The lady seemed to think Kookoo had no business there ; 'Sieur George seemed to think the same concerning his companion ; and the few words between Mademoiselle and 'Sieur George were cool enough. The maid appeared nearly satisfied, but could not avoid casting an anxious eye at times upon her mistress. Naturally the visit was short.

The next day but one the two gentlemen came again in better attire. 'Sieur George evidently disliked his companion, yet would not rid himself of him. The stranger was a gesticulating, stagy fellow, much Monsieur's junior, an incessant talker in Creole-French, always excited on small matters and unable to appreciate a great one. Once, as they were leaving, Kookoo—accidents will happen—was under the stairs. As they began to descend the tall man was speaking : "—better to bury it," the startled landlord heard him say, and held his breath, thinking of the trunk ; but no more was uttered.

A week later they came again.

A week later they came again.

A week later they came yet again !

The landlord's eyes began to open. There must be a courtship in progress. It was very plain now why 'Sieur George had wished not to be accompanied by the tall gentleman ; but since his visits had become regular and frequent, it was equally plain why he did

not get rid of him ; because it would not look well to be going and coming too often alone. Maybe it was only this tender passion that the tall man had thought " better to bury." Lately there often came sounds of gay conversation from the first of the two rooms, which had been turned into a parlour ; and as, week after week, the friends came downstairs, the tall man was always in high spirits and anxious to embrace 'Sieur George, who—" sly dog," thought the landlord—would try to look grave, and only smiled in an embarrassed way. " Ah ! Monsieur, you tink to be varry conning ; *mais* you not so conning as Kookoo, no " ; and the inquisitive little man would shake his head and smile, and shake his head again, as a man has a perfect right to do under the conviction that he has been for twenty years baffled by a riddle and is learning to read it at last ; he had guessed what was in 'Sieur George's head—he would by-and-by guess what was in his trunk.

A few months passed quickly away, and it became apparent to every eye in or about the ancient mansion that the landlord's guess was not so bad ; in fact, that Mademoiselle was to be married.

On a certain rainy spring afternoon a single hired hack drove up to the main entrance of the old house, and after some little bustle and the gathering of a crowd of damp children about the big doorway, 'Sieur George, muffled in a newly-repaired overcoat, jumped out and went upstairs. A moment later he reappeared, leading Mademoiselle, wreathed and veiled, down the stairway. Very fair was Mademoiselle still. Her beauty was mature—fully ripe—maybe a little too much so, but only a little ; and as she came down with the ravishing odour of bridal flowers floating about her, she seemed the garlanded victim of a pagan sacrifice. The mulattress in holiday gear followed behind.

The landlord owed a duty to the community. He arrested the maid on the last step : " Your mistress, she goin' *pour marier* 'Sieur George ? It make me glad, glad, glad ! "

" Marry 'Sieur George ? Non, Monsieur."

" Non ? Not marrie 'Sieur George ? *Mais comment ?* "

" She's going to marry the tall gentleman."

" *Diable !* ze long gentyman ! "—With his hands upon his forehead, he watched the carriage trundle away. It passed out of sight through the rain ; he turned to enter the house, and all at once tottered under the weight of a tremendous thought—they had left the trunk ! He hurled himself upstairs as he had done seven years before, but again—" Ah, bah ! ! "—the door was locked, and not a picayune of rent due.

Late that night a small square man, in a wet overcoat, fumbled his way into the damp entrance of the house, stumbled up the cracking stairs, unlocked, after many languid efforts, the door of the two rooms, and falling over the hair-trunk, slept until the morning sunbeams climbed over the balcony and in at the window, and

shone full on the back of his head. Old Kookoo, passing the door just then, was surprised to find it slightly ajar—pushed it open slightly, and saw, within, 'Sieur George in the act of rising from his knees beside the mysterious trunk! He had come back to be once more the tenant of the two rooms.

'Sieur George, for the second time, was a changed man—changed from bad to worse; from being retired and reticent, he had come by reason of advancing years, or mayhap that which had left the terrible scar on his face, to be garrulous. When, once in a while, employment sought him (for he never sought employment), whatever remuneration he received went its way for something that left him dingy and threadbare. He now made a lively acquaintance with his landlord, as, indeed, with every soul in the neighbourhood, and told all his adventures in Mexican prisons and Cuban cities: including full details of the hardships and perils experienced jointly with the "long gentleman" who had married Mademoiselle, and who was no Mexican or Cuban, but a genuine Louisianian.

"It was he that fancied me," he said, "not I him; but once he had fallen in love with me I hadn't the force to cast him off. How Madame ever should have liked him was one of those woman's freaks that a man mustn't expect to understand. He was no more fit for her than rags are fit for a queen; and I could have choked his head off the night he hugged me round the neck and told me what a suicide she had committed. But other fine women are committing that same folly every day, only they don't wait until they're thirty-four or five to do it.—'Why don't I like him?' Well, for one reason, he's a drunkard!" Here Kookoo, whose imperfect knowledge of English prevented his intelligent reception of the story, would laugh as if the joke came in just at this point.

However, with all Monsieur's prattle, he never dropped a word about the man he had been before he went away; and the great hair-trunk puzzle was still the same puzzle, growing greater every day.

Thus the two rooms had been the scene of some events quite queer, if not really strange; but the queerest that ever they presented, I guess, was 'Sieur George coming in there one day, crying like a little child, and bearing in his arms an infant—a girl—the lovely offspring of the drunkard whom he so detested, and poor, robbed, spirit-broken and now dead Madame. He took good care of the orphan, for orphan she was very soon. The long gentleman was pulled out of the Old Basin one morning, and 'Sieur George identified the body at the Trème station. He never hired a nurse—the father had sold the lady's maid quite out of sight; so he brought her through all the little ills and around all the sharp corners of baby life and childhood, without a human hand to help him, until one evening, having persistently shut his eyes to it for weeks and months, like one trying to sleep in the sunshine, he awoke to the

realisation that she was a woman. It was a smoky one in November, the first cool day of autumn. The sunset was dimmed by the smoke of burning prairies, the air was full of the ashes of grass and reeds, ragged urchins were lugging home sticks of cordwood, and when a bit of coal fell from a cart in front of Kookoo's old house, a child was boxed half across the street and robbed of the booty by a *blanchisseuse de fin* from over the way.

The old man came home quite steady. He mounted the stairs smartly without stopping to rest, went with a step unusually light and quiet to his chamber, and sat by the window opening npon the rusty balcony.

It was a small room, sadly changed from what it had been in old times ; but then so was 'Sieur George. Close and dark it was, the walls stained with dampness and the ceiling full of bald places that showed the lathing. The furniture was cheap and meagre, including conspicuously the small, curious-looking hair-trunk. The floor was of white slabs fastened down with spikes, and sloping up and down in one or two broad undulations, as if they had drifted far enough down the current of time to feel the tide-swell.

However, the floor was clean, the bed well made, the cypress table in place, and the musty smell of the walls partly neutralised by a geranium on the window-sill.

He so coming in and sitting down, an unseen person called from the room adjoining (of which, also, he was still the rentee) to know if he were he, and being answered in the affirmative, said, " Papa George, guess who was here to-day ? "

" Kookoo, for the rent ? "

" Yes, but he will not come back."

" No ? why not ? "

" Because you will not pay him."

" No ? and why not ? "

" Because I have paid him."

" Impossible ! where did you get the money ? "

" Cannot guess ?—Mother Nativity."

" What, not for embroidery ? "

" No ? and why not ? *Mais oui !* "—saying which, and with a pleasant laugh, the speaker entered the room. She was a girl of sixteen or thereabout, very beautiful, with very black hair and eyes. A face and form more entirely out of place you could not have found in the whole city. She sat herself at his feet, and, with her interlocked hands upon his knee, and her face, full of childish innocence mingled with womanly wisdom, turned to his, appeared for a time to take principal part in a conversation which, of course, could not be overheard in the corridor outside.

Whatever was said, she presently rose, he opened his arms, and she sat on his knee and kissed him. This done, there was a silence, both smiling pensively and gazing out over the rotten balcony into

the street. After a while she started up, saying something about the change of weather, and, slipping away, thrust a match between the bars of the grate. The old man turned about to the fire, and she from her little room brought a low sewing-chair and sat beside him, laying her head on his knee, and he stroking her brow with his brown palm.

And then, in an altered—a low, sad tone—he began a monotonous recital.

Thus they sat, he talking very steadily and she listening, until all the neighbourhood was wrapped in slumber—all the neighbours, but not Kookoo.

Kookoo in his old age had become a great eavesdropper ; his ear and eye took turns at the keyhole that night, for he tells things that were not intended for outside hearers. He heard the girl sobbing, and the old man saying, " But you must go now. You cannot stay with me safely or decently, much as I wish it. The Lord only knows how I'm to bear it, or where you're to go ; but He's your Lord, child, and He'll make a place for you. I was your grandfather's death ; I frittered your poor, dead mother's fortune away ; let that be the last damage I do.

" I have always meant everything for the best," he added, half in soliloquy.

From all Kookoo could gather, he must have been telling her the very story just recounted. She had dropped quite to the floor, hiding her face in her hands, and was saying between her sobs, " I cannot go, Papa George ; oh, Papa George, I cannot go ! "

Just then 'Sieur George, having kept a good resolution all day, was encouraged by the orphan's pitiful tones to contemplate the most senseless act he ever attempted to commit. He said to the sobbing girl that she was not of his blood ; that she was nothing to him by natural ties ; that his covenant was with her grandsire to care for his offspring ; and though it had been poorly kept, it might be breaking it worse than ever to turn her out upon ever so kind a world.

" I have tried to be good to you all these years. When I took you, a wee little baby, I took you for better or worse. I intended to do well by you all your childhood days, and to do best at last. I thought surely we should be living well by this time, and you could choose from a world full of homes and a world full of friends.

" I don't see how I missed it ! " Here he paused a moment in meditation, and presently resumed with some suddenness—

" I thought that education, far better than Mother Nativity has given you, should have afforded your sweet charms a noble setting ; that good mothers and sisters would be wanting to count you into their families, and that the blossom of a happy womanhood would open perfect and full of sweetness.

" I would have given my life for it. I did give it, such as it was ;

but it was a very poor concern, I know—my life—and not enough to buy any good thing.

"I have had a thought of something, but I'm afraid to tell it. It didn't come to me to-day or yesterday; it has beset me a long time—for months."

The girl gazed into the embers, listening intensely.

"And oh! dearie, if I could only get you to think the same way, you might stay with me then."

"How long?" she asked, without stirring.

"Oh, as long as heaven should let us. But there is only one chance," he said, as it were feeling his way, "only one way for us to stay together. Do you understand me?"

She looked up at the old man with a glance of painful inquiry.

"If you could be—my wife, dearie!"

She uttered a low, distressful cry, and, gliding swiftly into her room, for the first time in her young life turned the key between them.

And the old man sat and wept.

Then Kookoo, peering through the keyhole, saw that they had been looking into the little trunk. The lid was up, but the back was toward the door, and he could see no more than if it had been closed.

He stooped and stared into the aperture until his dry old knees were ready to crack. It seemed as if 'Sieur George was stone, only stone couldn't weep like that.

Every separate bone in his neck was hot with pain. He would have given ten dollars—ten sweet dollars!—to have seen 'Sieur George get up and turn that trunk around.

There! 'Sieur George rose up—what a face.

He started toward the bed, and as he came to the trunk he paused, looked at it, muttered something about "ruin," and something about "fortune," kicked the lid down, and threw himself across the bed.

Small profit to old Kookoo that he went to his own couch; sleep was not for the little landlord. For well-nigh half a century he had suspected his tenant of having a treasure hidden in his house, and to-night he had heard his own admission that in the little trunk was a fortune. Kookoo had never felt so poor in all his days before. He felt a Creole's anger, too, that a tenant should be the holder of wealth while his landlord suffered poverty.

And he knew very well, too, did Kookoo, what the tenant would do. If he did not know what he kept in the trunk, he knew what he kept behind it, and he knew he would take enough of it to-night to make him sleep soundly.

No one would ever have supposed Kookoo capable of a crime. He was too fearfully impressed with the extra-hazardous risks of dishonesty; he was old, too, and weak, and, besides all, intensely a

coward. Nevertheless, while it was yet two or three hours before daybreak, the sleep-forsaken little man arose, shuffled into his garments, and in his stocking-feet sought the corridor leading to 'Sieur George's apartment. The night, as it often does in that region, had grown warm and clear; the stars were sparkling like diamonds pendent in the deep blue heavens, and at every window and lattice and cranny the broad, bright moon poured down its glittering beams upon the hoary-headed thief, as he crept along the mouldering galleries and down the ancient corridor that led to 'Sieur George's chamber.

'Sieur George's door, though ever so slowly opened, protested with a loud creak. The landlord, wet with cold sweat from head to foot, and shaking till the floor trembled, paused for several minutes, and then entered the moonlit apartment. The tenant, lying as if he had not moved, was sleeping heavily. And now the poor coward trembled so, that to kneel before the trunk, without falling, he did not know how. Twice, thrice, he was near tumbling headlong. He became as cold as ice. But the sleeper stirred, and the thought of losing his opportunity strung his nerves up in an instant. He went softly down upon his knees, laid his hands upon the lid, lifted it, and let in the intense moonlight. The trunk was full, full, crowded down and running over full, of the tickets of the Havana Lottery!

A little after daybreak, Kookoo from his window saw the orphan, pausing on the corner. She stood for a moment, and then drove into the dense fog which had floated in from the river, and disappeared. He never saw her again.

But her Lord is taking care of her. Once only she has seen 'Sieur George. She had been in the belvedere of the house which she now calls home, looking down upon the outspread city. Far away southward and westward the great river glistened in the sunset. Along its sweeping bends the chimneys of a smoking commerce, the magazines of surplus wealth, the gardens of the opulent, the steeples of a hundred sanctuaries and thousands on thousands of mansions and hovels covered the fertile birthright arpents which 'Sieur George, in his fifty years' stay, had seen tricked away from dull colonial Esaus by their blue-eyed brethren of the North. Nearer by she looked upon the forlornly silent region of lowly dwellings, neglected by legislation and shunned by all lovers of comfort, that once had been the smiling fields of her own grandsire's broad plantation; and but a little way off, trudging across the marshy commons, her eye caught sight of 'Sieur George following the sunset out upon the prairies to find a night's rest in the high grass.

She turned at once, gathered the skirt of her pink calico uniform, and, watching her steps through her tears, descended the steep winding stair to her frequent kneeling-place under the fragrant candles of the chapel altar in Mother Nativity's asylum.

'Sieur George is houseless. He cannot find the orphan. Mother Nativity seems to know nothing of her. If he could find her now, and could get from her the use of ten dollars for but three days, he knows a combination which would repair all the past ; it could not fail, he—thinks. But he cannot find her, and the letters he writes—all containing the one scheme—disappear in the mail-box, and there's an end.

"POSSON JONE'"

GEORGE W. CABLE

To Jules St.-Ange—elegant little heathen—there yet remained at manhood a remembrance of having been to school, and of having been taught by a stony-headed Capuchin that the world is round—for example, like a cheese. This round world is a cheese to be eaten through, and Jules had nibbled quite into his cheese world already at twenty-two.

He realized this as he idled about one Sunday morning where the intersection of Royal and Conti streets some seventy years ago formed a central corner of New Orleans. Yes, yes, the trouble was he had been wasteful and honest. He discussed the matter with that faithful friend and confidant, Baptiste, his yellow body-servant. They concluded that, papa's patience and *tante's* pin-money having been gnawed away quite to the rind, there were left open only these few easily enumerated resorts : to go to work—they shuddered ; to join Major Innerarity's filibustering expedition ; or else—why not ?—to try some games of confidence. At twenty-two one must begin to be something. Nothing else tempted ; could that avail ? One could but try. It is noble to try ; and, besides, they were hungry. If one could "make the friendship" of some person from the country, for instance, with money, not expert at cards or dice, as one would say, willing to learn, one might find cause to say some "Hail Marys."

The sun broke through a clearing sky, and Baptiste pronounced it good for luck. There had been a hurricane in the night. The weed-grown tile roofs were still dripping, and from lofty brick and low adobe walls a rising steam responded to the summer sunlight. Upstreet, and across the Rue du Canal, one could get glimpses of the gardens in Faubourg Ste. Marie standing in silent wretchedness, so many tearful Lucretias, tattered victims of the storm. Short remnants of the wind now and then came down the narrow street in erratic puffs heavily laden with odours of broken boughs and torn

flowers, skimmed the little pools of rain-water in the deep ruts of the unpaved street, and suddenly went away to nothing, like a juggler's butterflies or a young man's money.

It was very picturesque, the Rue Royale. The rich and poor met together. The locksmith's swinging key creaked next door to the bank; across the way, crouching, mendicant-like, in the shadow of a great importing house, was the mud laboratory of the mender of broken combs. Light balconies overhung the rows of showy shops and stores open for trade this Sunday morning, and pretty Latin faces of the higher class glanced over their savagely-pronged railings upon the passers below. At some windows hung lace curtains, flannel duds at some, and at others only the scraping and sighing one-hinged shutter groaning toward Paris after its neglectful master.

M. St.-Ange stood looking up and down the street for nearly an hour. But few ladies, only the inveterate mass-goers, were out. About the entrance of the frequent *cafés* the masculine gentility stood leaning on canes, with which now one and now another beckoned to Jules, some even adding pantomimic hints of the social cup.

M. St.-Ange remarked to his servant without turning his head that somehow he felt sure he should soon return those *bons* that the mulatto had lent him.

"What will you do with them?"

"Me!" said Baptiste quickly; "I will go and see the bull-fight in the Place Congo."

"There is to be a bull-fight? But where is M. Cayetano?"

"Ah, got all his affairs wet in the tornado. Instead of his circus, they are to have a bull-fight—not an ordinary bull-fight with sick horses, but a buffalo and tiger fight. I would not miss it——"

Two or three persons ran to the opposite corner, and commenced striking at something with their canes. Others followed. Can M. St.-Ange and servant, who hasten forward—can the Creoles, Cubans, Spaniards, San Domingo refugees, and other loungers—can they hope it is a fight? They hurry forward. Is a man in a fit? The crowd pours in from the side streets. Have they killed a so-long snake? Bareheaded shopmen leave their wives, who stand upon chairs. The crowd huddles and packs. Those on the outside make little leaps into the air, trying to be tall.

"What is the matter?"

"Have they caught a real live rat?"

"Who is hurt?" asks some one in English.

"*Personne*," replies a shopkeeper; "a man's hat blow' in the gutter; but he has it now. Jules pick' it. See, that is the man, head and shoulders on top the res'."

"He in the homespun?" asks a second shopkeeper. "Humph! an *Américain*—a West Floridian; bah!"

"But wait; 'st! he is speaking; listen!"

"To who is he speak——"

"Sh-sh-sh! to Jules."

"Jules who?"

"Silence, you! To Jules St.-Ange, what howe me a bill since long time. Sh-sh-sh!"

Then the voice was heard.

Its owner was a man of giant stature, with a slight stoop in his shoulders, as if he was making a constant, good-natured attempt to accommodate himself to ordinary doors and ceilings. His bones were those of an ox. His face was marked more by weather than age, and his narrow brow was bald and smooth. He had instantaneously formed an opinion of Jules St.-Ange, and the multitude of words, most of them lingual curiosities, with which he was rasping the wide-open ears of his listeners, signified, in short, that, as sure as his name was Parson Jones, the little Creole was a "plum gentleman."

M. St.-Ange bowed and smiled, and was about to call attention, by both gesture and speech, to a singular object on top of the still uncovered head, when the nervous motion of the *Américain* anticipated him, as, throwing up an immense hand, he drew down a large roll of bank-notes. The crowd laughed, the West Floridian joining, and began to disperse.

"Why, that money belong to Smyrny Church," said the giant.

"You are very dengerous to make your money expose like that, Misty Posson Jone'," said St.-Ange, counting it with his eyes.

The countryman gave a start and smile of surprise.

"How d'dyou know my name was Jones?" he asked; but without pausing for the Creole's answer, furnished in his reckless way some further specimens of West-Floridian English; and the conciseness with which he presented full intelligence of his home, family, calling, lodging-house, and present and future plans, might have passed for consummate art, had it not been the most run-wild nature. "And I've done been to Mobile, you know, on business for Bethesdy Church. It's the on'yest time I ever been from home; now you wouldn't of believed that, would you? But I admire to have saw you, that's so. You've got to come and eat with me. Me and my boy ain't been fed yit. What might one call yo' name? Jools? Come on, Jools. Come on, Colossus. That's my niggah—his name's Colossus of Rhodes. Is that yo' yallah boy, Jools? Fetch him along, Colossus. It seems like a special providence.—Jools do you believe in a special providence?"

Jules said he did.

The new-made friends moved briskly off, followed by Baptiste and a short, square, old negro, very black and grotesque, who had introduced himself to the mulatto, with many glittering and cavernous smiles, as "d'body sarvant of d'Rev'n' Mr. Jones."

Both pairs enlivened their walk with conversation. Parson Jones

descanted upon the doctrine he had mentioned, as illustrated in the perplexities of cotton-growing, and concluded that there would always be "a special prov*idence* again' cotton untell folks quits a pressin' of it and haulin' of it on Sundays!"

"*Je dis*," said St.-Ange, in response, "I thing you is juz right. I believe, me, strong-strong in the improvidence, yes. You know, my papa he hown a sugah plantation, you know. 'Jules, me son,' he say one time to me, 'I goin' to make one baril sugah to fedge the moze high price in New Orleans.' Well, he take his bez baril sugah—I nevah see a so careful man like me papa always to make a so beautiful sugah *et sirop*. 'Jules, go at Father Pierre an' ged this lill pitcher fill with holy water, an' tell him sen' his tin bucket, and I will make it fill with *quitte*.' I ged the holy water; my papa sprinkle it over the baril, an' make one cross on the 'ead of the baril."

"Why, Jools," said Parson Jones, "that didn't do no good."

"Din do no good! Id broughd the so great value! You can strike me dead if thad baril sugah din fedge the more high cost than any other in the city. *Parceque*, the man what buy that baril sugah he make a mistake of one hundred pound"—falling back—"*mais* certainlee!"

"And you think that was growin' out of the holy water?" asked the parson.

"*Mais*, what could make it else? Id not be the *quitte*, because my papa keep the bucket, an' forget to sen' the *quitte* to Father Pierre."

Parson Jones was disappointed.

"Well, now, Jools, you know, I don't think that was right. I reckon you must be a plum Catholic."

M. St.-Ange shrugged. He would not deny his faith.

"I am a *Catholique, mais*"—brightening as he hoped to recommend himself anew—"not a good one."

"Well, you know," said Jones—"where's Colossus? Oh! all right. Colossus strayed off a minute in Mobile, and I plum lost him for two days. Here's the place; come in. Colossus and this boy can go to the kitchen.—Now, Colossus, what *air* you a beckonin' at me faw?"

He let his servant draw him aside and address him in a whisper.

"Oh, go' way!" said the parson, with a jerk. "Who's goin' to throw me? What? Speak louder. Why, Colossus, you shayn't talk so, saw. 'Pon my soul, you're the mightiest fool I ever taken up with. Jest you go down that alleyway with this yalla boy, and don't show yo' face untell yo' called!"

The negro begged; the master wrathily insisted.

"Colossus, will you do ez I tell you, or shell I hev' to strike you, saw?"

"O Mahs Jimmy, I—I's gwine; but"—he ventured nearer—"don't on no account drink nothin', Mahs Jimmy."

Such was the negro's earnestness that he put one foot in the gutter, and fell heavily against his master. The parson threw him off angrily.

"Thar, now! Why, Colossus, you most of been dosted with sumthin'; yo' plum crazy.—Humph, come on Jools, let's eat! Humph! to tell me that when I never taken a drop, exceptin' for chills, in my life—which he knows so as well as me!"

The two masters began to ascend a stair.

"*Mais*, he is a sassy; I would sell him, me," said the young Creole.

"No, I wouldn't do that," replied the parson; "though there is people in Bethesdy who says he is a rascal. He's a powerful smart fool. Why, that boy's got money, Jools; more money than religion, I reckon. I'm shore he fallen into mighty bad company"—they passed beyond earshot.

Baptiste and Colossus, instead of going to the tavern kitchen, passed to the next door and entered the dark rear corner of a low grocery, where, the law notwithstanding, liquor was covertly sold to slaves. There, in the quiet company of Baptiste and the grocer, the colloquial powers of Colossus, which were simply prodigious, began very soon to show themselves.

"For whilst," said he, "Mahs Jimmy has eddication, you know—whilst he has eddication, I has 'scretion. He has eddication and I has 'scretion, an' so we gits along."

He drew a black bottle down the counter, and, laying half his length upon the damp board, continued:

"As a p'inciple I discredits de imbimin' of awjus liquors. De imbimin' of awjus liquors, de wiolution of de Sabbas, de playin' of de fiddle, and de usin' of bywords, dey is de fo' sins of de conscience; an' if any man sins de fo' sins of de conscience, de debble done sharp his fork fo' dat man. Ain't that so, boss?"

The grocer was sure it was so.

"Neberdeless, mind you"—here the orator brimmed his glass from the bottle and swallowed the contents with a dry eye—"mind you, a roytious man, sech as ministers of de gospel and dere body sarvants, can take a *leetle* for de weak stomach."

But the fascinations of Colossus' eloquence must not mislead us; this is the story of a true Christian, to wit, Parson Jones.

The parson and his new friend ate. But the coffee M. St.-Ange declared he could not touch; it was too wretchedly bad. At the French Market, near by, there was some noble coffee. This, however, would have to be bought, and Parson Jones had scruples.

"You see, Jools, every man has his conscience to guide him, which it does so in——"

"Oh yes!" cried St.-Ange, "conscien'; thad is the bez, Posson Jone'. Certainlee! I am a *Catholique*, you is a *schismatique*; you thing it is wrong to dring some coffee—well, then, it *is* wrong; you

thing it is wrong to make the sugah to ged the so large price—well, then, it *is* wrong ; I think it is right—well, then, it *is* right ; it is all 'abit ; *c'est tout.* What a man thing is right, *is right* ; 'tis all 'abit. A man muz nod go again' his conscien'. My faith ! do you thing I would go again' my conscien' ? *Mais allons,* led us go and ged some coffee."

"Jools."

"W'at ? "

"Jools, it ain' the drinkin' of coffee, but the buyin' of it on a Sabbath. You must really excuse me Jools, it's again' conscience, you know."

"Ah ! " said St.-Ange, "*c'est* bery true. For you it would be a sin, *mais* for me it is only 'abit. Rilligion is a very strange ; I know a man one time, he thing it was wrong to go to cockfight Sunday evening. I thing it is all 'abit. *Mais,* come, Posson Jone' ; I have got one friend, Miguel ; led us go at his house and ged some coffee. Come ; Miguel have no familie ; only him and Joe—always like to see friend ; *allons,* led us come yonder."

"Why, Jools, my dear friend, you know," said the shame-faced parson, "I never visit on Sundays."

"Never w'at ? " asked the astounded Creole.

"No," said Jones, smiling awkwardly.

"Never visite ? "

"Exceptin' sometimes amongst church members," said Parson Jones.

"*Mais,*" said the seductive St.-Ange, "Miguel and Joe is church member'—certainlee ! They love to talk about rilligion. Come at Miguel and talk about some rilligion. I am nearly expire for me coffee.

Parson Jones took his hat from beneath his chair and rose up.

"Jools," said the weak giant, "I ought to be in church right now."

"*Mais,* the church is right yonder at Miguel', yes. Ah ! " continued St.-Ange, as they descended the stairs, "I thing every man muz have the rilligion he like' the bez—me, I like the *Catholique* rilligion the bez—for me it *is* the bez. Every man will sure go to heaven if he like his rilligion the bez."

"Jools," said the West Floridian, laying his great hand tenderly upon the Creole's shoulder, as they stepped out upon the *banquette,* "do you think you have any shore hopes of heaven ? "

"Yass ! " replied St.-Ange ; "I am sure-sure. I thing everybody will go to heaven. I thing you will go, *et* I thing Miguel will go, *et* Joe—everybody, I thing—*mais,* hof course, not if they not have been christen'. Even I thing some niggers will go."

"Jools," said the parson, stopping in his walk—"Jools, I *don't* want to lose my niggah."

"You will not loose him. With Baptiste he *cannot* ged loose."

But Colossus' master was not reassured.

"Now," said he, still tarrying, "this is jest the way; had I of gone to church——"

"Posson Jone'," said Jules.

"What?"

"I tell you. We goin' to church!"

"Will you?" asked Jones joyously.

"*Allons*, come along," said Jules, taking his elbow.

They walked down the Rue Chartres, passed several corners, and by and by turned into a cross street. The parson stopped an instant as they were turning, and looked back up the street.

"W'at you lookin'?" asked his companion.

"I thought I saw Colossus," answered the parson, with an anxious face; "I reckon 'twan't him, though." And they went on.

The street they now entered was a very quiet one. The eye of any chance passer would have been at once drawn to a broad, heavy, white brick edifice on the lower side of the way, with a flag-pole standing out like a bowsprit from one of its great windows, and a pair of lamps hanging before a large closed entrance. It was a theater, honeycombed with gambling dens. At this morning hour all was still, and the only sign of life was a knot of little barefoot girls gathered within its narrow shade, and each carrying an infant relative. Into this place the parson and M. St.-Ange entered, the little nurses jumping up from the sills to let them pass in.

A half-hour may have passed. At the end of that time the whole juvenile company were laying alternate eyes and ears to the chinks, to gather what they could of an interesting quarrel going on within.

"I did not, saw! I given you no cause of offense, saw! It's not so, saw! Mister Jools simply mistaken the house, thinkin' it was a Sabbath school! No such thing, saw; I *ain't* bound to bet! Yes, I kin git out! Yes, without bettin'! I hev a right to my opinion; I reckon I'm a *white man*, saw! No, saw! I on'y said I didn't think you could get the game on them cards. 'Sno such thing, saw! I do *not* know how to play! I wouldn't hev a rascal's money ef I should win it! Shoot, ef you dare! You can kill me, but you cayn't scare me! No, I shayn't bet. I'll die first! Yes, saw; Mr. Jools can bet for me if he admires to; I ain't his mostah."

Here the speaker seemed to direct his words to St.-Ange.

"Saw, I don't understand you, saw. I never said I'd loan you money to bet for me. I didn't suspicion this from you, saw. No, I won't take any more lemonade; it's the most notorious stuff I ever drank, saw!"

M. St.-Ange's replies were in *falsetto* and not without effect; for presently the parson's indignation and anger began to melt. "Don't ask me, Jools, I can't help you. It's no use; it's a matter of conscience with me, Jools."

"*Mais oui!* 'tis a matt' of conscien' wid me, the same."

"But, Jools, the money's none o' mine, nohow; it belongs to Smyrny, you know."

"If I could make jus' *one* bet," said the persuasive St.-Ange, "I would leave this place, fas'-fas', yes. If I had thing—*mais* I did not soupspicion this from you, Posson Jone'——"

"Don't, Jools, don't!"

"No! Posson Jone'."

"You're bound to win?" said the parson, wavering.

"*Mais certainement!* But it is not to win that I want; 'tis me conscien'—me honor!"

"Well, Jools, I hope I'm not a doin' no wrong. I'll loan you some of this money if you say you'll come right out 'thout takin' your winnin's."

All was still. The peeping children could see the parson as he lifted his hand to his breast pocket. There it paused a moment in bewilderment, then plunged to the bottom. It came back empty, and fell lifelessly at his side. His head dropped upon his breast, his eyes were for a moment closed, his broad palms were lifted and pressed against his forehead, a tremor seized him, and he fell all in a lump to the floor. The children ran off with their infant loads, leaving Jules St.-Ange swearing by all his deceased relatives, first to Miguel and Joe, and then to the lifted parson, that he did not know what had become of the money "except if" the black man had got it.

In the rear of ancient New Orleans, beyond the sites of the old rampart, a trio of Spanish forts, where the town has since sprung up and grown old, green with all the luxuriance of the wild Creole summer, lay the Congo Plains. Here stretched the canvas of the historic Cayetano, who Sunday after Sunday sowed the sawdust for his circus ring.

But to-day the great showman had fallen short of his printed promise. The hurricane had come by night, and with one fell swash had made an irretrievable sop of everything. The circus trailed away its bedraggled magnificence, and the ring was cleared for the bull.

Then the sun seemed to come out and work for the people. "See," said the Spaniards, looking up at the glorious sky with its great, white fleets drawn off upon the horizon—"see—heaven smiles upon the bull-fight!"

In the high upper seats of the rude amphitheatre sat the gaily-decked wives and daughters of the Gascons, from the *métaries* along the Ridge, and the chattering Spanish women of the Market, their shining hair unbonneted to the sun. Next below were their husbands and lovers in Sunday blouses, milkmen, butchers, bakers, black-bearded fishermen, Sicilian fruiterers, swarthy Portuguese sailors, in little woollen caps, and strangers of the graver sort; mariners of

England, Germany, and Holland. The lowest seats were full of trappers, smugglers, Canadian *voyageurs*, drinking and singing; *Américains*, too—more's the shame—from the upper rivers—who will not keep their seats,—who ply the bottle, and who will get home by-and-by and tell how wicked Sodom is; broad-brimmed, silver-braided Mexicans, too, with their copper cheeks and bat's eyes, and their tinkling spurred heels. Yonder, in that quieter section, are the quadroon women in their black lace shawls—and there is Baptiste; and below them are the turbaned black women, and there is—but he vanishes—Colussus.

The afternoon is advancing, yet the sport, though loudly demanded, does not begin. The *Américains* grow derisive and find pastime in gibes and raillery. They mock the various Latins with their national inflections, and answer their scowls with laughter. Some of the more aggressive shout pretty French greetings to the women of Gascony, and one bargeman, amid peals of applause, stands on a seat and hurls a kiss to the quadroons. The mariners of England, Germany, and Holland, as spectators, like the fun, while the Spaniards look black and cast defiant imprecations upon their persecutors. Some Gascons, with timely caution, pick their women out and depart, running a terrible fire of gallantries.

In hope of truce, a new call is raised for the bull: "The bull, the bull!—hush!"

In a tier near the ground a man is standing and calling—standing head and shoulders above the rest—calling in the *Américaine* tongue. Another man, big and red, named Joe, and a handsome little Creole in elegant dress and full of laughter, wish to stop him, but the flatboatmen, ha-ha-ing and cheering, will not suffer it. Ah, through some shameful knavery of the men, into whose hands he has fallen, he is drunk! Even the women can see that; and now he throws his arms wildly and raises his voice until the whole great circle hears it. He is preaching!

Ah! kind Lord, for a special providence now! The men of his own nation—men from the land of the open English Bible and temperance cup and song are cheering him on to mad disgrace. And now another call for the appointed sport is drowned by the flatboatmen singing the ancient tune of Mear. You can hear the words—

"Old Grimes is dead, that good old soul"

—from ribald lips and throats turned brazen with laughter, from sinners who toss their hats aloft and roll in their seats; the chorus swells to the accompaniment of a thousand brogans—

"He used to wear an old gray coat
All buttoned down before."

A ribboned man in the arena is trying to be heard, and the Latins

raise one mighty cry for silence. The big red man gets a hand over the parson's mouth, and the ribboned man seizes his moment

"They have been endeavouring for hours," he says, "to draw the terrible animals from their dens, but such is their strength and fierceness that——"

His voice is drowned. Enough has been heard to warrant the inference that the beasts cannot be whipped out of the storm-drenched cages to which menagerie life and long starvation have attached them, and from the roar of indignation the man of ribbons flies. The noise increases. Men are standing up by hundreds, and women are imploring to be let out of the turmoil. All at once, like the bursting of a dam, the whole mass pours down into the ring. They sweep across the arena and over the showman's barriers. Miguel gets a frightful trampling. Who cares for gates or doors? They tear the beasts' houses bar from bar, and, laying hold of the gaunt buffalo, drag him forth by feet, ears, and tail; and in the midst of the *mêlée*, still head and shoulders above all, wilder, with the cup of the wicked, than any beast, is the man of God from the Florida parishes!

In his arms he bore—and all the people shouted at once when they saw it—the tiger. He had lifted it high up with its back to his breast, his arms clasped under its shoulders; the wretched brute had curled up caterpillar-wise, with its long tail against its belly, and through its filed teeth grinned a fixed and impotent wrath. And Parson Jones was shouting:

"The tiger and the buffler *shell* lay down together! You dah to say they shayn't, and I'll comb you with this varmint from head to foot! The tiger and the buffler *shell* lay down together. They *shell*! Now, you, Joe! Behold! I am here to see it done. The lion and the buffler *shell* lay down together!"

Mouthing these words again and again, the parson forced his way through the surge in the wake of the buffalo. This creature the Latins had secured by a lariat over his head, and were dragging across the old rampart and into a street of the city.

The northern races were trying to prevent, and there was pommelling and knocking down, cursing and knife-drawing, until Jules St.-Ange was quite carried away with the fun, laughed, clapped his hands, and swore with delight, and ever kept close to the gallant parson.

Joe, contrariwise, counted all this child's play an interruption. He had come to find Colossus and the money. In an unlucky moment he made bold to lay hold of the parson, but a piece of the broken barriers in the hands of a flatboatman felled him to the sod, the terrible crowd swept over him, the lariat was cut, and the giant parson hurled the tiger upon the buffalo's back. In another instant both brutes were dead at the hands of the mob; Jones was lifted from his feet, and prating of Scripture and the millennium, of Paul

at Ephesus and Daniel in the " buffler's " den, was borne aloft upon the shoulders of the huzzaing *Américains*. Half an hour later he was sleeping heavily on the floor of a cell in the *calaboza*.

When Parson Jones awoke, a bell was somewhere tolling for midnight. Somebody was at the door of his cell with a key. The lock grated, the door swung, the turnkey looked in and stepped back, and a ray of moonlight fell upon M. Jules St.-Ange. The prisoner sat upon the empty shackles and ringbolt in the centre of the floor.

" Misty Posson Jone'," said the visitor softly.

" O Jools ! "

" *Mais*, w'at de matter, Posson Jone' ? "

" My sins, Jools, my sins ! "

" Ah ! Posson Jone', is that something to cry, because a man get sometime a litt' bit intoxicate ? *Mais*, if a man keep *all the time* intoxicate, I think that is again' the conscien'."

" Jools, Jools, your eyes is darkened—oh ! Jools, where's my pore old niggah ? "

" Posson Jone', never min' ; he is wid Baptiste."

" Where ? "

" I don' know w'ere—*mais* he is wid Baptiste. Baptiste is a beautiful to take care of somebody."

" Is he as good as you, Jools ? " asked Parson Jones sincerely.

Jules was slightly staggered.

" You know, Posson Jone', you know, a nigger cannot be good as a w'ite man—*mais* Baptiste is a good nigger."

The parson moaned and dropped his chin into his hands.

" I was to of left for home to-morrow, sun-up, on the *Isabella* schooner. Pore Smyrny ! " He deeply sighed.

" Posson Jone'," said Jules, leaning against the wall and smiling, " I swear you is the moz funny man I ever see. If I was you I would say, me, ' Ah ! 'ow I am lucky ! the money I los', it was not mine, anyhow ! ' My faith ! shall a man make hisse'f to be the more sorry because the money he los' is not his ? Me, I would say, ' It is a specious providence.'

" Ah ! Misty Posson Jone'," he continued, " you make a so droll sermon ad the bull ring. Ha ! ha ! I swear I thing you can make money to preach thad sermon many time ad the theatre St. Philippe. Hah ! you is the moz brave dat I never see, *mais* ad the same time the moz rilligious man. Where I'm goin' to fin' one priest to make like dat ? *Mais*, why you can't cheer up an' be 'appy ? Me, if I should be miserabl' like that I would kill meself."

The countryman only shook his head.

" *Bien*, Posson Jone', I have the so good news for you."

The prisoner looked up with eager inquiry.

" Las' evening when they lock' you, I come right off at M. De Blanc's house to get you let out of de calaboose ; M. De Blanc he is the judge. So soon I was entering—' Ah ! Jules, me boy, juz the

man to make complete the game!' Posson Jone', it was a specious providence! I win in t'ree hours more dan six hundred dollah! Look." He produced a mass of bank notes, *bons*, and duebills.

"And you got the pass?" asked the parson, regarding the money with a sadness incomprehensible to Jules.

"It is here; it take the effect so soon the daylight."

"Jools, my friend, your kindness is in vain."

The Creole's face became a perfect blank.

"Because," said the parson, "for two reasons: firstly, I have broken the laws, and ought to stand the penalty; and secondly—you must really excuse me, Jools, you know, but the pass has been got onfairly, I'm afeerd. You told the judge I was innocent; and in neither case it don't become a Christian (which I hope I can still say I am one) to 'do evil that good may come.' I muss stay." M. St.-Anges stood up aghast, and for a moment speechless, at this exhibition of moral heroism; but an artifice was presently hit upon. "*Mais*, Posson Jone'!"—in his old *falsetto*—"de order—you cannot read it, it is in French—compel you to go hout, sir!" "Is that so?" cried the parson, bounding up with radiant face—"is that so, Jools?" The young man nodded, smiling; but, though he smiled, the fountain of his tenderness was opened. He made the sign of the cross as the parson knelt in prayer, and even whispered "Hail Mary," etc. quite through, twice over.

Morning broke in summer glory upon a cluster of villas behind the city, nestled under live oaks and magnolias on the banks of a deep bayou, and known as Suburb St. Jean.

With the first beam came the West Floridian and the Creole out upon the bank below the village. Upon the parsons's arm hung a pair of antique saddlebags. Baptiste limped wearily behind; both his eyes were encircled with broad, blue rings, and one cheek bone bore the official impress of every knuckle of Colossus' left hand. The "beautiful to take care of somebody" had lost his charge. At mention of the negro he became wild, and, half in English, half in the "gumbo" dialect, said murderous things. Intimidated by Jules to calmness, he became able to speak confidently on one point: he could, would, and did swear that Colossus had gone home to the Florida parishes; he was almost certain; in fact, he thought so.

There was a clicking of pulleys as the three appeared upon the bayou's margin, and Baptiste pointed out, in the deep shadow of a great oak, the *Isabella*, moored among the bulrushes, and just spreading her sails for departure. Moving down to where she lay, the parson and his friend paused on the bank, loath to say farewell.

"O Jools!" said the parson, "supposin' Colossus ain't gone home! O Jools, if you'll look him out for me, I'll never forget you—I'll never forget you, nohow, Jools. No, Jools, I never will believe he taken that money. Yes, I know all niggahs will steal"—he set

foot upon the gang plank—" but Colossus wouldn't steal from me. Good-by."

" Misty Posson Jone'," said St.-Ange, putting his hand on the parson's arm with genuine affection, " hol' on. You see dis money—w'at I win las' night? Well, I win it by a specious providence, ain't it? "

" There's no tellin'," said the humbled Jones. " Providence

Moves in a mysterious way
His wonders to perform."

" Ah! " cried the Creole, " *c'est* very true. I ged this money in the mysterieuze way. *Mais*, if I keep dis money, you know where it goin' be to-night? "

" I really can't say," replied the parson.

" Goin' to de dev'," said the sweetly smiling young man.

The schooner captain, leaning against the shrouds, and even Baptiste, laughed outright.

" O Jools, you mustn't! "

" Well, den, w'at I shall do wid *it*? "

" Anything! " answered the parson; " better donate it away to some poor man——"

" Ah! Misty Posson Jone', dat is w'at I want. You los' five hondred dollar'—'twas me fault."

" No, it wa'n't, Jools."

" *Mais*, it was! "

" No! "

" It *was* me fault! I *swear* it was me fault! *Mais*, here is five hondred dollar'; I wish you shall take it. Here! I don't got no use for money.—Oh, my faith! Posson Jone', you must not begin to cry some more."

Parson Jones was choked with tears. When he found voice he said:

" O Jools, Jools, Jools! my pore, noble, dear, misguidened friend! ef you hed of hed a Christian raisin'! May the Lord show you your errors better'n I kin, and bless you for your good intentions—oh, no! I cayn't touch that money with a ten-foot pole; it wa'n't rightly got: you must really excuse me, my dear friend, but I cayn't touch it."

St.-Ange was petrified.

" Good-by, dear Jools," continued the parson. " I'm in the Lord's haynds, and he's very merciful, which I hope and trust you'll find it out. Good-by! "—the schooner swung slowly off before the breeze—" good-by! "

St.-Ange roused himself.

" Posson Jone'! make me hany'ow *dis* promise: you never, never, *never* will come back to New Orleans."

" Ah, Jools, the Lord willin', I'll never leave home again! "

"All right!" cried the Creole; "I thing he's willin'. Adieu, Posson Jone'. My faith! you are the so fighting an' moz rilligious man as I never saw! Adieu! Adieu!"

Baptiste uttered a cry and presently ran by his master toward the schooner, his hands full of clods.

St.-Ange looked just in time to see the sable form of Colossus of Rhodes emerge from the vessel's hold, and the pastor of Smyrna and Bethesda seize him in his embrace.

"O Colossus! you outlandish old nigger! Thank the Lord! Thank the Lord!"

The little Creole almost wept. He ran down the towpath, laughing and swearing, and making confused allusion to the entire *personnel* and furniture of the lower regions.

By odd fortune, at the moment that St.-Ange further demonstrated his delight by tripping his mulatto into a bog, the schooner came brushing along the reedy bank with a graceful curve, the sails flapped, and the crew fell to poling her slowly along.

Parson Jones was on the deck, kneeling once more in prayer. His hat had fallen before him; behind him knelt his slave. In thundering tones he was confessing himself "a plum fool," from whom "the conceit had been jolted out," and who had been made to see that even his "nigger had the longest head of the two."

Colossus clasped his hands and groaned.

The parson prayed for a contrite heart.

"Oh yes!" cried Colossus.

The master acknowledged countless mercies.

"Dat's so!" cried the slave.

The master prayed that they might still be "piled on."

"Glory!" cried the black man, clapping his hands; "pile on!"

"An' now," continued the parson, "bring this pore, back-slidin' jackace of a parson and this pore ole fool nigger back to thar home in peace!"

"Pray fo' de money!" called Colossus.

But the parson prayed for Jules.

"Pray fo' de *money*!" repeated the negro.

"And oh, give thy servant back that there lost money!"

Colossus rose stealthily, and tiptoed by his still shouting master. St.-Ange, the captain, the crew, gazed in silent wonder at the strategist. Pausing but an instant over the master's hat to grin an acknowledgment of his beholders' speechless interest, he softly placed in it the faithfully mourned and honestly prayed-for Smyrna fund; then, saluted by the gesticulative, silent applause of St.-Ange and the schooner men, he resumed his first attitude behind his roaring master.

"Amen!" cried Colossus, meaning to bring him to a close.

"Onworthy though I be——" cried Jones.

"*Amen!*" reiterated the negro.

" A-a-amen ! " said Parson Jones.

He rose to his feet, and, stooping to take up his hat, beheld the well-known roll. As one stunned, he gazed for a moment upon his slave, who still knelt with clasped hands and rolling eyeballs ; but when he became aware of the laughter and cheers that greeted him from both deck and shore, he lifted eyes and hands to heaven, and cried like the veriest babe. And when he looked at the roll again, and hugged and kissed it, St.-Ange tried to raise a second shout, but choked, and the crew fell to their poles.

And now up runs Baptiste, covered with slime, and prepares to cast his projectiles. The first one fell wide of the mark ; the schooner swung round into a long reach of water, where the breeze was in her favour ; another shout of laughter drowned the maledictions of the muddy man ; the sails filled ; Colossus of Rhodes, smiling and bowing as hero of the moment, ducked as the main boom swept round, and the schooner, leaning slightly to the pleasant influence, rustled a moment over the bulrushes, and then sped far away down the rippling bayou.

M. Jules St.-Ange stood long, gazing at the receding vessel as it now disappeared, now reappeared, beyond the tops of the high undergrowth ; but when an arm of the forest hid it finally from sight he turned downward, followed by that fagged-out spaniel, his servant, saying, as he turned, " Baptiste."

" *Miché ?* "

" You know w'at I goin' to do wid dis money ? "

" *Non, m'sieur.*"

" Well, you can strike me dead if I don't goin' to pay hall my debts ! *Allons !* "

He began a merry little song to the effect that his sweetheart was a wine bottle, and master and man, leaving care behind, returned to the picturesque Rue Royale. The ways of Providence are indeed strange. In all Parson Jones' after life, amid the many painful reminiscences of his visit to the City of the Plain, the sweet knowledge was withheld from him that by the light of the Christian virtue that shone from him even in his great fall, Jules St.-Ange arose, and went to his father an honest man.

ELIZABETH STUART PHELPS

1844–1911

LITTLE TOMMY TUCKER

THERE were but three persons in the car; a merchant, deep in the income list of the *Traveller*, an old lady with two band-boxes, a man in the corner with his hat pulled over his eyes. Tommy opened the door, peeped in, hesitated, looked into another car, came back, gave his little fiddle a shove on his shoulder, and walked in.

"Hi! Little Tommy Tucker
Plays for his supper,"

shouted the young exquisite lounging on the platform in tan-coloured coat and lavender kid gloves.

"O Kids, you're there, are you? Well, I'd rather play for it than loaf for it, *I* had," said Tommy stoutly.

The merchant shot a careless glance over the top of his paper at the sound of this *petit dialogue*, and the old lady smiled benignly; the man in the corner neither looked not smiled.

Nobody would have thought, to look at that man in the corner, that he was at that very moment deserting a wife and five children. Yet that is precisely what he was doing.

A villain? Oh no, that is not the word. A brute? Not by any means. A man, weak, unfortunate, discouraged, and selfish, as weak, unfortunate, and discouraged people are apt to be; that was the amount of it. His panoramas never paid him for the use of his halls. His travelling tin-type saloon had trundled him into a sheriff's hands. His petroleum speculations had crashed like a bubble. His black and gold sign, *F. Harmon, Photographer*, had swung now for nearly a year over the dentist's rooms, and he had had the patronage of precisely six old women and three babies. He had drifted to the theatre in the evenings, he did not care now to remember how many times—the fellows asked him, and it made him forget his troubles; the next morning his empty purse would gape at him, and Annie's mouth would quiver. A man must have his glass, too, on Sundays, and—well, perhaps a little oftener. He had not always been fit to go to work after it; and Annie's mouth would quiver. It will be seen at once that it was exceedingly hard on a man that his wife's mouth should quiver. "Confound it! Why

couldn't she scold or cry? These still women aggravated a fellow beyond reason."

Well, then the children had been sick; measles, whooping cough, scarlatina, mumps, he was sure he did not know what not; every one of them from the baby up. There was medicine, and there were doctor's bills, and there was sitting up with them at night—their mother usually did that. Then she must needs pale down herself, like a poorly-finished photograph; all her colour and roundness and sparkle gone; and if ever a man liked to have a pretty wife about it was he. Moreover she had a cough, and her shoulders had grown round, stooping so much over the heavy baby, and her breath came short, and she had a way of being tired. Then she never stirred out of the house—he found out about that one day; she had no bonnet, and her shawl had been cut up into blankets for the crib. The children had stopped going to school. "They could not buy the new arithmetic," their mother said, half under her breath. Yesterday there was nothing for dinner but Johnny-cake, nor a large one at that. To-morrow the saloon rents were due. Annie talked about pawning one of the bureaus. Annie had had great purple rings under her eyes for six weeks.

He would not bear the purple rings and quivering mouth any longer. He hated the sight of her, for the sight stung him. He hated the corn-cake and the untaught children. He hated the whole dreary, dragging, needy home. The ruin of it dogged him like a ghost, and he should be the ruin of it as long as he stayed in it. Once fairly rid of him, his scolding and drinking, his wasting and failing, Annie would send the children to work, and find ways to live. She had energy and invention, a plenty of it in her young, fresh days, before he came across her life to drag her down. Perhaps he should make a golden fortune, and come back to her some summer day with a silk dress and servants, and make it all up; in theory this was about what he expected to do. But if his ill-luck went westward with him, and the silk dress never turned up, why, she would forget him, and be better off, and that would be the end of it.

So here he was, ticketed and started, fairly bound for Colorada, sitting with his hat over his eyes, and thinking about it.

"Hm-m. Asleep," pronounced Tommy, with his keen glance into the corner. "Guess I'll wake him up."

He laid his cheek down on his little fiddle—you don't know how Tommy loved that little fiddle—and struck up a gay, rollicking tune:

"I care for nobody, and nobody cares for me."

The man in the corner sat quite still. When it was over he shrugged his shoulders.

"When folks are asleep they don't hist their shoulders, not as a general thing," observed Tommy. "We'll try another."

Tommy tried another. Nobody knows what possessed the little fellow, the little fellow himself least of all; but he tried this:

"We've lived and loved together,
Through many changing years."

It was a new tune and he wanted practice, perhaps.

The train jarred and started slowly; the gloved exquisite, waiting hackmen, baggage-masters, coffee-counter, and station walls slid back; engine-house and prison towers, and labyrinths of tracks, slipped by; lumber and shipping took their place, with clear spaces between, where sea and sky shone through. The speed of the train increased with a sickening sway; old wharves shot past, with the green water sucking at their piers; the city shifted by and out of sight.

"We've lived and loved together,"

played Tommy in a little plaintive wail,

"We've lived and loved"——

"Confound the boy!" Harmon pushed up his hat with a jerk, and looked out of the window. The night was coming on. A dull sunset lay low on the water, burning like a bale-fire through the snaky trail of smoke that went writhing past the car windows. Against lonely signal-houses and little deserted beaches the water was plashing drearily, and playing monotonous basses to Tommy's wail:

"Through many changing years,
Many changing years."

It was a nuisance this music in the cars. Why didn't somebody stop it? What did the child mean by playing that? They had left the city far behind now. He wondered how far. He pushed up the window fiercely, venting the passion of the music on the first thing that came in his way, and thrust his head out to look back. Through the undulating smoke, out in the pale glimmer from the sky, he could see a low, red tongue of land, covered with the twinkle of lighted homes. Somewhere there, in among the quivering warmth, was one—

What was that boy about now? Not "Home, sweet home"? But that was what Tommy was about.

They were lighting the lamps now in the car. Harmon looked at the conductor's face, as the sickly yellow flare struck on it, with a curious sensation. He wondered if he had a wife and five children; if he ever thought of running away from them; what he would think of a man who did; what most people would think; what she would think. She!—ah, she had it all to find out yet.

"There's no place like home."

said Tommy's little fiddle,

" O, no place like home."

Now this fiddle of Tommy's may have had a crack or so in it, and I cannot assert that Tommy never struck a false note ; but the man in the corner was not fastidious as a musical critic ; the sickly light was flickering through the car, the quiver on the red flats was quite out of sight, the train was shrieking away into the west—the baleful, lonely west—which was dying fast now out there upon the sea, and it is a fact that his hat went slowly down over his face again, and that his face went slowly down upon his arm.

There, in the lighted home out upon the flats, that had drifted by for ever, she sat waiting now. It was about time for him to be in to supper ; she was beginning to wonder a little where he was ; she was keeping the coffee hot, and telling the children not to touch their father's pickles ; she had set the table and drawn the chairs ; his pipe lay filled for him upon the shelf over the stove. Her face in the light was worn and white—the dark rings very dark ; she was trying to hush the boys, teasing for their supper ; begging them to wait a few minutes, only a few minutes, he would surely be here then. She would put the baby down presently, and stand at the window with her hands—Annie's hands once were not so thin—raised to shut out the light—watching, watching.

The children would eat their supper ; the table would stand untouched, with his chair in its place ; still she would go to the window, and stand watching, watching. Oh, the long night that she must stand watching, and the days, and the years !

" Sweet, sweet home,"

played Tommy.

By and by there was no more of " Sweet Home."

" How about that cove with his head lopped down on his arms ? " speculated Tommy, with a business-like air.

He had only stirred once, then put his face down again. But he was awake, awake in every nerve ; and listening, to the very curve of his fingers. Tommy knew that ; it being part of his trade to learn how to use his eyes. The sweet, loyal passion of the music—it would take worse playing than Tommy's to drive the sweet, loyal passion out of Annie Laurie—grew above the din of the train !

" 'Twas there that Annie Laurie
Gave me her promise true."

She used to sing that, the man was thinking—this other Annie of his own. Why, she had been his own, and he had loved her once. How he had loved her ! Yes, she used to sing that when he went to see her on Sunday nights, before they were married—in her pink plump, pretty days. Annie used to be very pretty.

" Gave me her promise true,"

hummed the little fiddle.

"That's a fact," said poor Annie's husband, jerking the words out under his hat, "and kept it too, she did."

Ah, how Annie had kept it! The whole dark picture of her married years—the days of work and pain, the nights of watching, the patient voice, the quivering mouth, the tact and the planning and the trust for to-morrow, the love that had borne all things, believed all things, hoped all things, uncomplaining—rose into outline to tell him how she had kept it.

"Her face it is the fairest
That e'er the sun shone on,"

suggested the little fiddle. That it should be darkened for ever, the sweet face! and that he should do it—he, sitting here, with his ticket bought, bound for Colorado.

"And ne'er forget will I,"

murmured the little fiddle.

He would have knocked the man down who had told him twenty years ago that he ever should forget; that he should be here to-night, with his ticket bought, bound for Colorado.

But it was better for her to be free from him. He and his cursed ill-luck were a drag on her and the children, and would always be. What was that she had said once?

"Never mind, Jack, I can bear anything as long as I have you."

And here he was, with his ticket bought, bound for Colorado.

He wondered if it were ever too late in the day for a fellow to make a man of himself. He wondered:

"And she's a' the world to me,
And for bonnie Annie Laurie
I'd lay me doon and dee,"

sang the little fiddle, triumphantly.

Harmon shook himself, and stood up. The train was slackening; the lights of a way-station bright ahead. It was about time for supper and his mother, so Tommy put down his fiddle and handed around his faded cap. The merchant threw him a penny and returned to his tax-list. The old lady was fast asleep with her mouth open.

"Come here," growled Harmon, with his eyes very bright. Tommy shrank back, almost afraid of him.

"Come here," softening, "I won't hurt you. I tell you, boy, you don't know what you've done to-night."

"Done, sir?" Tommy couldn't help laughing, though there was a twinge of pain at his stout little heart, as he fingered the solitary penny in the faded cap. "Done? Well, I guess I've waked you up, sir, which was about what I meant to do."

"Yes, that is it," said Harmon, very distinctly, pushing up his hat, "you've waked me up. Here, hold your cap."

They had puffed into the station now and stopped. He emptied his purse into the little cap, shook it clean of paper and copper alike, was out of the car and off the train before Tommy could have said Jack Robinson.

"My eyes!" gasped Tommy, "that chap had a ticket for New York, sure! Methusalah! Look a here! One, two, three—must have been crazy; that's it, crazy."

"He'll never find out," muttered Harmon, turning away from the station lights, and striking back through the night for the red flats and home. "He'll never find out what he has done, nor, please God, shall she."

It was late when he came in sight of the house; it had been a long tramp across the tracks, and hard; he being stung by a bitter wind from the east all the way, tired with the monotonous treading of the sleepers, and with crouching in perilous niches to let the trains go by.

She stood watching at the window, as he had known that she would stand, her hands raised to her face, her figure cut out against the warm light of the room. He stood still a moment and looked at her, hidden in the shadow of the street, thinking his own thoughts. The publican, in the old story, hardly entered the beautiful temple with more humble step than he his home that night.

She sprang to meet him, pale with her watching and fear.

"Worried, Annie, were you? I haven't been drinking; don't be frightened—no, not the theatre, either this time. Some business, dear; business that delayed me. I'm sorry you were worried, I am, Annie. I've had a long walk. It is pleasant here. I believe I'm tired, Annie." He faltered, and turned away his face.

"Dear me," said Annie, "why, you poor fellow, you are all tired out. Sit right up here by the fire, and I will bring the coffee. I've tried so hard not to let it boil away, you don't know, Jack; and I was so afraid something had happened to you."

Her face, her voice, her touch, seemed more than he could bear for a minute, perhaps. He gulped down his coffee, choking.

"Annie, look here." He put down his cup, trying to smile and make a jest of the words. "Suppose a fellow had it in him to be a rascal, and nobody ever knew it, eh?"

"I should rather not know it, if I were his wife," said Annie.

"But you couldn't care anything more for him, you know, Annie?"

"I don't know," said Annie, shaking her head with a little perplexed smile; "you would be just Jack, *anyhow*."

Jack coughed, took up his coffee-cup, set it down hard, strode once or twice across the room, kissed the baby in the crib, kissed his wife, and sat down again, winking at the fire.

"I wonder if He had anything to do with sending him," he said presently, under his breath.

"Sending whom?" asked puzzled Annie.

"Business, dear, just business. I was thinking of a boy who did a little job for me to-night, that's all."

And that is all that she knows to this day about the man sitting in the corner, with his hat over his eyes, bound for Colorado.

CAPTAIN ROLAND T. COFFIN

circa 1845

HOW OLD WIGGINS WORE SHIP

AN OLD SAILOR'S YARN

"WELL, sir," said the old sailor, "here we are ag'in. I ain't been round here much lately, and atwixt you and me, she's put the 'kybosh onto it, holdin' that comin' round here and hystin' are promotin' of rheumatics, which, as are well known, they come of long and various exposures in all climates, to say nothin' of watchin' onto a damp dock night arter night continual. But what's the use? Everybody knows as a quiet home are better than silver and fine gold, which it stands to reason are to be obtained in two ways. Wimmin are like sailors in some respects; whoever has anythin' to do with 'em must either be saddled and bridled, leastwise, or else booted and spurred. You've got to ride 'em, or else they'll ride you. Bein' a sailorman myself, it ain't likely as I'd say anythin' ag'in 'em; but if the truth must be told, I'll say this—that while it'll never do, not at no price, for to let sailors git the upper hand, there's many a man as has giv' the helm into the hands of his old woman and made a better v'yage thereby; and I don't mind sayin', sir, that havin' while follerin' the water got into the habit of allowin' her for to be skipper in the house durin' my short stoppin's on shore, it got for to be so much the custom, that since comin' home for a full due I ain't never tried for to break away from it; and though human natur' is falliable, and she does make mistakes, especially about the hystin', on the whole, and by and large, I judges I've been a gainer by it, as I believes at least eight men out of ten would be if they took the hint accordin' and went and done likewise.

"I don't go for to say as she ever goes to go to say I ain't a-goin' for to let you go there; but it are terrible aggrivokin' when the rheumatics twinges awful, and as it might be that this sawmill don't want no more splinters laid onto it, to have her feelin'ly remark, 'Well, if you will go round a-guzzlin' ale with your swell friends and a-leavin' your lawful wife to home alone you must expect to pay for it,' whereas I know it are the dock and other

causes long gone by; but that knowledge don't ease the pain a morsel, and the last time I were that way tantalized I swore I wouldn't come here no more. But whatever are the use? Man resolves and re-resolves and then takes another snifter, and so here I are, and bein' as it's cold, as so she sha'n't have no basis for her unfeelin' remark about guzzlin' ale, we'll let him make it hot rum, and arter the old receipt, neither economizin' in the rum or the sugar, but givin' a fair drink for honest money.

"Well, well (just mix another afore the glass cools off), to think how the time goes. Here it are autumn ag'in, and in a few weeks 'twill be winter. It reminds me (I'll take one more, if you please, with one lump less of sugar and the space in rum) that I'm gettin' old, and I feels it. My eyes ain't so good and my legs ain't so good, and I ain't so good all over. When I goes down to the dock my lantern are heavier than it used to were, and the distance ain't so short as it used to seem from the dock to the house. Afore many years I'll be put quietly away, and though I'd prefer bein' beautifully sewed up and launched shipshape in blue water, with a hundred pound weight for to keep me down, I s'poses it won't make much difference, nohow. Anyhow, if I lives as long as old Wiggins, I hopes I may go as well at the eend. I don't think I ever told you about him, and if you'll let him fill 'em up ag'in—for it's one of the vartues of hot rum that the more you drinks the thirstier you gits—I'll reel you the yarn right off.

"Old Wiggins had been all his life into the Liverpool trade and had got well fixed, so far as cash were consarned; and so when he came for to be seventy or seventy-two years old he were persuaded for to knock off for a full due and spend the balance of his life ashore. Goin' up to some place in Connecticut, he buys hisself a place there and settles down. Well, for a time he were all right, a-fixin' up his house, a-buildin' new barns and hen-coops and fences and the like, and I've heerd tell that the house where he kep' his pigs were better than any dwellin'-house in that region, and the whole place were the wonder of the country roundabout; but arter he had fixed his house all up like a ship, with little state-rooms all through the upper part of it, and had got everythin' inside and out in shipshape order and there weren't nothin' else he could think of for to do, he gits terribly homesick and discontented, and times when he'd come to the city for to collect his sheer of the profits of ships as he had a interest in, he'd sit for hours on the wharf a-watchin' the vessels on the river, and it were like drawin' teeth for to git him to leave and go up to his home. His eyes had giv' out sometime afore he quit the sea, and his legs was shaky, so as he had to walk with a settin' pole, and his hand were tremblin' and unsteady; but aloft he were still all right, and his head were as clear as a bell.

"Arter bein' ashore a matter of seven year, he comes to town

one day to see a ship off what he had been in afore he quit, and in which he had a half interest. The skipper of that ship, which her name were the *Vesuvius*, he bein' called Perkins, in comin' from the Custom House arter clearin', got athwart-hawse of a dray and were knocked down, the wheels passin' over his legs and breakin' of 'em, and whatever do old Wiggins do—the home-sickness bein' strong onto him—but says to the agents, ' It are a pity for to lose a day's fair wind ; I'll go aboard and take her out myself ' ; and, sure enough, he done it, never lettin' on to the folks at home, but leavin' the agents to tell 'em arter he were gone.

" Into that ship I were shipped, she bein' 830 tons or thereabouts with three royal yards across, and loaded with flour and grain, there bein' sixteen of us afore the mast, with two mates, carpenter and cook and steward, leavin' on the 16th of November, and, unless I'm mistakened, in the year 1843.

" We towed down to the Hook and out over the bar, and then put the muslin on to her with a fine breeze from sou'west, and I supposes there weren't a happier man in the world than old Wiggins when he discharged the pilot and steamer and took charge.

" ' I've giv' 'em the slip,' says he to the mate. ' I've giv' 'em the slip. They thought I were too old for to go to sea, but I'll show 'em thar's plenty of life into me yet. Git out all the starboard stunsails and see to it that she's kep' a-movin' night and day, for in sixteen days I expects to walk the pierhead in Liverpool.' Well, sure enough, a-movin' she were kep', and I never seen harder carryin's on than I seen that passage ; but we never lost a stitch of canvas, 'cause the old man not only knowed how to carry it, but he knowed how to take it off of her when it be to come off, and in a gale of wind he'd 'liven up wonderful, whereas in light weather he'd show his age. It were funny for to see him takin' the sun and tryin' to read her off, which he weren't able for to do, not by no means.

" ' What d'ye stand on ? ' he'd say to the mate arter screwin' his eye to the glass and tryin' to make it out ; and when the mate would tell him, he'd say, ' I believe that agrees with me ; just take a squint at my instrument ; my eyesight ain't just as good as it used for to be, and I don't quite make it out.' Then the mate would read him off his instrument, and arter he'd made it eight bells he'd go down and work it up and prick her off. The fourteenth day out we made the light on Fastnet Rock, off Cape Clear, and went bowlin' along the coast, passin' Tuskar next day, and swingin' her off up channel and round Hollyhead past the Skerries and takin' a pilot off P'int Lynas. It were a sight worth seein' for to watch the old man handle her in takin' a pilot. The wind were fresh from west-nor'west, and we passed the Skerries with all three royals set and lower topmast and to'gallan' stunsails on the port side. As soon as ever we passed the rocks we kep'

off for Lynas, and as soon as the stunsails got by the lee they was hauled in. Then with the wind about two p'ints on the starboard quarter we went bilin' along for the boat which we seen standin' off shore just to the east'ard of the P'int. There were a pretty bubble of a sea on, and afore we gits to him he goes about standin' in to the bay and givin' sheet. We follers along arter him, goin' two feet to his one, still carryin' all three royals, with hands at halliards and clewlines. Just afore we gits to him the old man sings out, 'Clew up the royals, haul down the flyin' jib, haul up the crochick and mainsail.' By this time we was well under the land and in smooth water. Keepin' his eye on to the pilot-boat, which were a couple of p'ints onto our weather bow, the old man no sooner seen her come to than he sings out, 'Hard up the helm!' And as we swung off afore the wind we runned up the foresail and laid the head-yards square; then mannin' the port main braces we let the to'gallan' yards run down on the caps and let her come to ag'in, and so nicely had the old man calculated the distance that as she come to the wind she shot up alongside of the pilot-boat, stoppin' just abreast of her and not over twenty foot away.

"'That was well done, Mr. Mate,' said the pilot, as he come over the side; 'some of these galoots makes us chase 'em half a day afore we can board 'em. Fill away the head-yards, put your helm up, run up the flyin' jib, brail up the spanker check in the arter yards,' and as she swung off he comes aft to the wheel where I was a-steerin', and says, 'Keep her east-sou'east, my man; giv' us a chew of terbacker. We soon had the muslin piled onto her ag'in, and sure enough, as old Wiggins had said, the sixteenth day out he walked the pierhead in Liverpool.

"I understood as old Wiggins was made a good deal on in Liverpool as bein' the oldest skipper that had ever come there, and the Board of Trade and what not giv' him dinners, and so on—which, considerin' his age, he oughtn't to have took—and by other skippers at the hotel he were much honoured, bein' giv' the head of the table and treated with great deference—and all this dinin' and winin' and feastin' weren't no good to him—and, arter a stay of three weeks, when we ag'in went down the river with full complement of passengers and a good freight, he weren't not by no means as well as when we went in. We had, too, a tough time down channel, a stiff sou'wester, with rain and thick weather, and it told onto the old man, so that when arter bein' out a week we at last got clear of Tuskar and had the ocean open, the relief from the strain fetched him, and he were took down sick.

"Whether it were to punish him for comin' to sea at his time of life or not I don't know; but from this on we did have the devil's own weather. Gale after gale from the west'ard, shiftin' constant from sou'west to nor'west, and tryin' constant to see from which quarter it could blow the hardest.

" The mate were a plucky and a able young feller, by the name of Graham, and he kep' her a-dancin' as well as the old man would have done. Constant she had everythin' put to her that she'd bear, and always were she kep' on the tack where she'd make the most westin', and so she struggled along till we was as far as thirty degrees west, we bein' thirty days out and not yet half way. Every day we asked the steward how old Wiggins were a-gittin' on, and every day he'd shake his head and say ' no better ' ; and it come to be understood, fore and aft, that it were as much as a toss-up if the old man ever smelled grass ag'in. We had a little let-up arter gittin' into the thirties, and for a day or so had fine weather and a chance to dry our dunnage. Fine days, however, is scarce in January on that herrin' pond—I'll take just another ; mentionin' herrin's makes me dry—and when you gits 'em they are most always weather-breeders. I went up on to the main royal yard when our side come up at eight o'clock one mornin' for to sew on the leather on the parral, and it were like a day in May. Afore I got the leather sewed on I be to look out for myself, 'cause they was goin' to clew up the sail, and from that time on it breezed on from the sou'ard, keepin' us constantly takin' the sail off of her, till at four bells we was under double-reefed topsails and reefed courses, with jib, crochick, and spanker stowed. We hammered away under this, carryin' on very heavy, 'cause she were headin' west-nor'west, which were a good course, till eight bells in the arternoon watch, when the sea gittin' up so tremendously we had to furl the reefed main-sail and mizzen topsail and close reef the fore and main-topsails.

" You'd think that were snug enough for any ship, now, wouldn't you ? and sartin it are ; no ship ever ought to have less canvas than this, till it blows away, 'cause she's safer with it onto her than with it off, the reefed foresail supportin' the yard. Well, we'd had gales and gales, but this here gale beat anythin' that I'd ever seen, and at seven bells in the first night watch, with a tremendious surge, the weather leech rope of the foresail giv' way, and in a jiffy away went the foreyard in the slings—the foresail and fore-topsail goin' into ribbons. All hands, of course, was busy for'ard, tryin' for to git some of this wreck stuff tranquillized, when all of a suddint from the poop come the old man's voice, full and round and clear, and not shrill and pipin' as we'd heard it last, and above all the roarin' of the gale and the din of the slattin' canvas we heerd him shout : ' Stations for wearin' ship. We must git her head round to the sou'ard,' he bawled in the ear of the mate, as Mr. Graham struggled aft ; ' the shift will come in less than half a hour, and it's goin' to be tremendious ; if it catches us aback it won't leave a stick into her ; but it ain't a-goin' to catch us, sir ; I've brung her through many and many a time like this. I'll bring her though this one, and then you must do the rest. Now, then,' says he, ' stand by,

put your helm just a few spokes a-weather, don't check her at all with the rudder, slack a foot or two of the lee braces and check in to wind'ard ; keep your eye constant on that sail, Mr. Clark '—that were the second mate—' and don't let it shake ; keep it good full and give her way ; lay the crochick yard square, and come up to the main-braces, all of you.' And so, gently, as if she'd been a sick child, he coaxed her to go off, and she begin to gather way. As soon as she done so the helm were put hard up, and the main-yard rounded in, just keepin' the topsail alift, but not permittin' it to shake. As she went off till she got the sea on the quarter, a mighty wave came a-rollin' along, boardin' us about the main riggin', floodin' the decks and dashin' out the starboard bulwarks. The minnit we got the wind onto the starboard quarter we braced the mainyard sharp up with the port-braces and bowsed the weather ones as taut as a harp string. 'Now, then,' says the old man, 'never mind that trash for-ard, let that go ; git a jumper on to the main-yard and a preventer main-topsail brace aloft ; lay aloft for your lives, and clap preventer gaskets on everythin' that's furled ; we'll have it soon from the north'ard fit to take the masts out of her.' He were right. In a short time there were a instant's lull, and then with a roar that were almost deafenin' came the cyclone from the north. Thanks to the old man's sagacity and experience, howsever, he was a-headin' sou'-south-east when it hit us, and it struck us right aft.

"'Steady as you go,' shouts the old man, and then, a minnit arter, as she gathered way, he say's ag'in to the mate, 'We must let her come to, Mr. Graham, we can't run her in the teeth of the old s'utherly sea ; ease down the helm and let her smell of it.' It was a powerful whiff she took, for as she come to and felt the force of the wind, all three to'gallan' masts went short off at the cap, the main-topsail sheets parted, and in an instant there wasn't a piece of the sail left big enough for a lady's handkerchief.

"'That's all it can do,' said the old man to the mate, bitterly ; 'git this trash on deck as soon as possible, and git her a-waggin' once more ; I've brung her through it safe, and am goin' home,' and with that he dropped onto the poop as dead as mutton. He had come on deck bare-headed and with nothin' on but his drawers and shirt, just as he had laid in his bunk for a fortnight, and the exposure had carried him off. However he knowed that the shift were so near nobody ever could tell. There were no doubt, however, but that his gittin' her weared round were our salvation. If that gust had a-struck us aback our masts would have gone sartin, and it's a toss-up but what we'd a-gone starn fust afore she'd a-backed round. Next day we giv' old Wiggins a funeral fit for the Emperor of Rooshy, and he well deserved it. I don't know as ever I seen a prettier sew-up than we done on him, wrappin' him first in the American ensign and then kiverin' him with brand-new No. 4 canvas. Considerin' the sails

we'd lost and how much we needed the canvas, I think he must have been satisfied that we done the handsome thing by him. The day was beautiful and clear, although the wind still blowed a gale. We hadn't been able to do much with the wreck stuff, except git lashin's onto it for to keep it from swingin' about, and we hadn't dared for to try for to send up another main-topsail. We had set the reefed main-sail for to steady her, and that were all. The three to'gallan' masts was still a-hangin' over the side, and the ribbons of the fore sail and fore topsail was still a-flutterin' in the breeze, when at eight bells, at mid-day, all hands was called for to bury the dead. Everythin' that we had in the way of nice clothes we had put on for to do honour to our captain, and most of us was able to sport white shirts and broad-cloth. We laid the old man onto a plank and kivered him with the Union Jack, and all hands gathered round him, while Mr. Graham read the sarvice. Everythin' went lovely, and just at the proper time we tilted the plank, and he slipped off without a hitch of any kind. Arter the mate finished the readin', he said, ' Men, there's a good man gone arter a long life of great usefulness. He were a sailor and a gentleman. I don't think as we ought for to cry over sich a man, and I propose we giv' him three cheers and God bless him ' ; and heartier cheers was never giv' than we giv' that day, arter which all hands got dinner."

STANLEY WATERLOO

1846–1913

AN ULM

"It is as you say; he is not handsome, certainly not beautiful as flowers and the stars and a woman are, but he has another sort of beauty, I think, such a beauty as made Victor Hugo's monster, Gwynplaine, fascinating, or gives a certain sort of charm to a banded rattlesnake. He is not much like the dove-eyed setter over whom we shot woodcock this afternoon, but to me he is the fairest object on the face of the earth, this gaunt, brindled Ulm.

"What is there about an Ulm especially attractive? Well, I don't know. About Ulms in the abstract, very little, I imagine. About an Ulm in the concrete, particularly the brute near us, a great deal. The Ulm is a morbid development in dog-breeding, anyhow. I remember, as doubtless you do as well, when the animals first made their appearance in this country a few years ago. The big, dirty-white beasts, dappled with dark blotches and with countenances unexplainably threatening, reminded one of hyenas with huge dog forms. Germans brought them over first, and they were affected by saloon-keepers and their class. They called them Siberian blood-hounds then, but the dog-fanciers got hold of them, and they became, with their sinister obtrusiveness, a feature of the shows; the breed was defined more clearly, and now they are known as Great Danes or Ulms, indifferently. How they originated I never cared to learn. I imagine it sometimes. I fancy some jilted, jaundiced descendant of the sea-rovers, retiring to his castle, and endeavouring, by mating some ugly bloodhound with a wild wolf, to produce a quadruped as fierce and cowardly and treacherous as a man or woman may be.

"Never mind about the dog, and tell you why I've been gentleman, farmer, sportsman and half-hermit here for the last five years—leaving everything just as I was getting a grip on reputation in town, leaving a pretty wife, too, after only a year of marriage? I can hardly do that—that is, I can hardly drop the dog, because, you see, he's part of the story. No need for going far back with the legend. You know it all up to the time I was married. You dined with me once or twice later. You remember my wife? Certainly she was a pretty woman, well bred, too, and wise, in a woman's way. I've seen a good deal of the world, but I don't know that I ever saw

a more tactful entertainer, or in private a more adorable woman when she chose to be affectionate. I was in that fool's paradise which is so big and holds so many people, sometimes for a year and a half after marriage. Then one day I found myself outside the wall.

" There was a beautiful set to my wife's chin, you may recollect—a trifle strong for a woman ; but I used to say to myself that, as students know, the mother most impresses the male offspring, and that my sons would be men of will. There was a fulness to her lips. Well, so there is to mine. There was a delicious, languorous craft in the look of her eyes at times. I care not at all for that. I thought she loved me and knew me. Love of me would give all faithfulness ; knowledge of me, even were the inclination to wrong existent, would beget a dread of consequences. My dear boy, we don't know women. Sometimes women don't know men. She did not know me any more than she loved me. She has become better informed.

" What happened ? Well, now come in the dog and the man. The dog was given me by a friend who was dog-mad, and who said to me the puppy would develop into a marvel of his kind, so long a pedigree he had. The man came in the form of an accidental new friend, an old friend of my wife, as subsequently developed. I invited him to my house, and he came often. I liked to have him there. I wanted to go to Congress—you know all about that—and wasn't often at home in the evening. He made the evenings less lonely for my wife, and I was glad of it.

" Meanwhile that brute of a puppy in the basement had been developing. He had grown into a great, rangy, long-toothed monster with a leer on his dull face, and the servants were afraid of him. I got interested and made a pet of the uncouth animal. I studied the Ulm character. I learned queer things about him. Despite his size and strength, he was frequently overcome by other dogs when he wandered into the street. He was tame until the shadows began to gather and the sun went down. Then a change came upon him. He ranged about the basement, and none but I dared venture down there. He was, in short, a cur by day, at night a demon. I supposed the early dogs of this breed had been trained to night slaughter and savageness alone, and that it was a case of atavism, a recurrence of hereditary instinct. It interested me vastly, and I resolved to make him the most perfect of watch-dogs. I trained him to lie couchant, and to spring upon and tear a stuffed figure I would bring into the basement. I noticed he always sprang at the throat. ' Hard lines.' thought I, ' for the burglar who may venture here ! '

" It was a little later than this nonsense with the dog, which was a piece of boyishness, a degree of relaxation to the strain of my fight with down-town conditions, that there came in what makes a man think the affairs of this world are not adjusted rightly, and makes

recurrent the impulse which was first unfortunate for Abel—no doubt worse for Cain. There is no need for going into details of the story, how I learned, or when. My knowledge was all-sufficient and absolute. My wife and my friend were sinning, riotously and fully, but discreetly—sinning against all laws of right and honour, and against me. The mechanism of it was simple. The grounds back of my house, you know, were large, and you may not have forgotten the lane of tall, clipped shrubbery that led up from the rear to a summer-house. His calls in the evening were made early and ended early. The pinkness of all propriety was about them. The servants suspected nothing. But, his call ended, the graceful gentleman, friend of mine and lover of my wife, would walk but a few hundred paces, then turn and enter my grounds at the rear gate I have mentioned, and pass up the arbour to the pretty summer-house. He would find time for pleasant anticipation there as he lolled upon one of the soft divans with which I had furnished the charming place; but his waiting would not be long; she would soon come to him.

When I learned what I have told—after the first awful five minutes—I don't like to think of them, even now—I became the most deliberate man on the face of this earth peopled with sinners. Sometimes, they say, the whole substance of a man's blood may be changed in a second by chemical action. My blood was changed, I think. The poison had transmuted it. There was a leaden sluggishness, but my head was clear.

"I had odd fancies. I remember I thought of a nobleman who had another torn slowly apart by horses for proving false to him at the siege of Calais. His cruelty had been a youthful horror to me. Now I had a tremendous appreciation of the man. 'Good fellow, good fellow!' I went about muttering to myself in a foolish, involuntary way. I wondered how my wife's lover could endure the strain of four strong Clydesdales, each started at the same moment, one north, one south, one east, one west. His charming personal appearance recurred to me, and I thought of his fine neck. Women like a fine-throated man, and he was one. I wondered if my wife's fancy tended the same way. It was well this idea came to me, for it gave me an inspiration. I thought of the dog.

"There is no harm, is there, in training a dog to pull down a stuffed figure? There is no harm, either, if the stuffed figure be given the simulated habiliments of some friend of yours. And what harm can there be in training the dog in a garden-arbour instead of in a basement? I dropped into the way of being at home a little more. I told my wife she should have alternate nights at least, and she was grateful and delighted. And on the nights when I was at home I would spend half an hour in the grounds with the dog, saying I was training him in new things, and no one paid attention. I taught him to crouch in the little lane close to the summer-house, and to rush down and leap upon the manikin when I displayed it

at the other end. Ye gods! how he learned to tear it down and tear its imitation throat! The training over, I would lock him in the basement as usual. But one night I had a dispatch come to me summoning me to another city. The other man was to call that evening, and he came. I left before nine o'clock, but just before going I released the dog. He darted for the post in the garden, and with gleaming eyes crouched, as he had been accustomed to do, watching the entrance of the arbour.

"I can always sleep well on a train. I suppose the regular sequence of sounds, the rhythmic throb of the motion, has something to do with it. I slept well and awoke refreshed when I reached my destination. I was driven to a hotel; I took a bath; I did what I rarely do, I drank a cocktail before breakfast. I sat down at the table; I gave my order, and then lazily opened the morning paper. One of the dispatches deeply interested me.

"'Inexplicable Tragedy' was the headline. By the way, 'Inexplicable Tragedy' contains just about the number of letters to fill a line neatly in the style of heading now the fashion. I don't know about such things, but it seems to me compact and neat and most effective. The lines which followed gave a skeleton of the story:

"'A Well-known Gentleman killed by a Dog.

"'Theory of the Case which appears the only one possible under the Circumstances.'

"I read the dispatch at length. A man is naturally interested in the news from his own city. It told how a popular club man had been found in the early morning lying dead in the grounds of a friend, his throat torn open by a huge dog, an Ulm, belonging to that friend, which had somehow escaped from the basement of the house, where it was usually confined. The gentleman had been a caller at the residence the same evening, and had left at a comparatively early hour. Some time later the mistress of the place had gone out to a summer-house in the grounds to see that the servants had brought in certain things used at a luncheon there during the day, but had seen nothing save the dog, which snarled at her, when she had gone into the house again. In the morning the gardener found the body of Mr.—— lying about midway of an arbour leading from a gateway to the summer-house. It was supposed that the unfortunate gentleman had forgotten something, a message or something of that sort, and upon its recurrence to him had taken the shorter cut to reach the house again, as he might do naturally, being an intimate friend of the family.

"Oddly enough, I received no telegram from my wife, but under the circumstances I could do nothing else than return to my home at once. I sought my wife, to whom I expressed my horror and my sorrow, but she said very little. The dog I found in the basement,

and he seemed very glad to see me. It has always been a source of regret to me that dogs cannot talk. I see that some one has learned that monkeys have a language, and that he can converse with them, after a fashion. If we could but talk with dogs!

"I saw the body, of course. I asked a famous surgeon once which would kill a man the quicker: severance of carotid artery or the jugular vein? I forget what his answer was, but in this case it really cut no figure. The dog had torn both open. It was on the left side. From this I infer that the dog sprang from the right, and that it was that big fang in his left upper jaw that did the work. Come here, you brute, and let me open your mouth! There, you see, as I turn his lips back, what a beauty of a tooth it is! I've thought of having that particular fang pulled, and of having it mounted and wearing it as a charm on my watch chain, but the dog is likely to die long before I do, and I've concluded to wait till then. But it's a beautiful tooth!

"I've mentioned, I believe, that my wife was a woman of keen perception. You will understand that after the unfortunate affair in my garden our relations were somewhat—I don't know just what word to use, but we'll say 'quaint.' It's a pretty little word, and sounds grotesque in this conversation. One day I provided an allowance for her, a good one, and came away here alone to play farmer and shoot and fish for four or five years. Somehow I lost interest in things, and knew I needed a rest. As for her, she left the house very soon and went to her own home. Oddly enough, she is in love with me now—in earnest this time. But we shall not live together again. I could never eat a peach off which the street vendors had rubbed the bloom. I never bought goods sold after a fire, even though externally untouched. I don't believe much in salvage as applied to the relations of men and women. I've seen, in the early morning, the unfortunates who eat choice bits from the garbage barrels. But I couldn't do it, you know. Odd, isn't it, what little things will disturb the tenor of a man's existence and interfere with all his plans?

"I came here and brought the dog with me. I'm fond of him, despite the failings in his character. Notwithstanding his currishness and the cowardly ferocity which comes out with the night, there is something definite about him. You know what to expect and what to rely upon. He does something. That is why I like Ulm.

"What am I going to do? Why, come back to town next year and pick up the threads. My nerves, which seemed a little out of the way, are better than they were when I came here. There's nothing to equal country air. I must have that whirl in my district yet. I don't think the boys have quite forgotten me. Have you noticed the drift at all? I could only judge from the papers. How are things in the Ninth Ward?"

JOEL CHANDLER HARRIS

1848–1908

BRER RABBIT'S CRADLE

"I WISH you'd tell me what you tote a hankcher fer," remarked Uncle Remus, after he had reflected over the matter a little while.

"Why, to keep my mouth clean," answered the little boy. Uncle Remus looked at the lad, and shook his head doubtfuily. "Uh-uh!" he exclaimed. "You can't fool folks when dey git ez ol' ez what I is. I been watchin' you now mo' days dan I kin count, an' I ain't never see yo' mouf dirty 'nuff fer ter be wiped wid a hankcher. It's allers clean—too clean fer to suit me. Dar's yo' pa, now; when he wuz a little chap like you, his mouf useter git dirty in de mornin' an' stay dirty plum twel night. Dey wa'n't sca'cely a day dat he didn't look like he been playin' wid de pigs in de stable lot. Ef he yever is tote a hankcher, he ain't never show it ter me."

"He carries one now," remarked the little boy with something like a triumphant look on his face.

"Tooby sho'," said Uncle Remus; "tooby sho' he do. He start ter totin' one when he tuck an' tuck a notion fer ter go a-courtin'. It had his name in one cornder, an' he useter sprinkle it wid stuff out'n a pepper-sauce bottle. It sho' wuz rank, dat stuff wuz; it smell so sweet it make you fergit whar you live at. I take notice dat you ain't got none on yone."

"No; mother says that cologne or any kind of perfumery on your handkerchief makes you common."

Uncle Remus leaned his head back, closed his eyes, and permitted a heartrending groan to issue from his lips. The little boy showed enough anxiety to ask him what the matter was. "Nothin' much, honey; I wuz des tryin' fer ter count how many diffunt kinder people dey is in dis big worl', an' 'fo' I got mo' dan half done wid my countin', a pain struck me in my mizry, an' I had ter break off."

"I know what you mean," said the child. "You think mother is queer; grandmother thinks so too."

"How come you to be so wise, honey?" Uncle Remus inquired, opening his eyes wide with astonishment.

"I know by the way you talk, and by the way grandmother looks sometimes," answered the little boy.

Uncle Remus said nothing for some time. When he did speak, it was to lead the little boy to believe that he had been all the time

engaged in thinking about something else. "Talkin' er dirty folks," he said, "you oughter seed yo' pa when he wuz a little bit er chap. Dey wuz long days when you couldn't tell ef he wuz black er white, he wuz dat dirty. He'd come out'n de big house in de mornin' ez clean ez a new pin, an' 'fo' ten er-clock you couldn't tell what kinder clof his cloze wuz made out'n. Many's de day when I've seed ol' Miss—dat's yo' great-gran-mammy—comb 'nuff trash out'n his head fer ter fill a basket."

The little boy laughed at the picture that Uncle Remus drew of his father. "He's very clean, now," said the lad loyally.

"Maybe he is an' maybe he ain't," remarked Uncle Remus, suggesting a doubt. "Dat's needer here ner dar. Is he any better off clean dan what he wuz when you couldn't put yo' han's on 'im widout havin' ter go an' wash um? Yo' gran'mammy useter call 'im a pig, an' clean ez he may be now, I take notice dat he makes mo' complaint er headache an' de heartburn dan what he done when he wuz runnin' roun' here half-naked an' full er mud. I hear tell dat some nights he can't git no sleep, but when he wuz little like you—no, suh, I'll not say dat, bekaze he wuz bigger dan what you is fum de time he kin toddle roun' widout nobody he'pin' him; but when he wuz ol' ez you an' twice ez big, dey ain't narry night dat he can't sleep—an' not only all night, but half de day ef dey'd 'a' let 'im. Ef dey'd let you run roun' here like he done, an' git dirty, you'd git big an' strong 'fo' you know it. Dey ain't nothin' mo' wholesomer dan a peck er two er clean dirt on a little chap like you."

There is no telling what comment the child would have made on this sincere tribute to clean dirt, for his attention was suddenly attracted to something that was gradually taking shape in the hands of Uncle Remus. At first it seemed to be hardly worthy of notice, for it had been only a thin piece of board. But now the one piece had become four pieces, two long and two short, and under the deft manipulations of Uncle Remus it soon assumed a boxlike shape.

The old man had reached the point in his work where silence was necessary to enable him to do it full justice. As he fitted the thin boards together, a whistling sound issued from his lips, as though he were letting off steam; but the singular noise was due to the fact that he was completely absorbed in his work. He continued to fit and trim, and trim and fit, until finally the little boy could no longer restrain his curiosity. "Uncle Remus, what are you making?" he asked plaintively.

"Larroes fer ter kech meddlers," was the prompt and blunt reply.

"Well, what are larroes to catch meddlers?" the child insisted.

"Nothin' much an' sump'n mo'. Dicky, Dicky, killt a chicky, an' fried it quicky, in de oven, like a sloven. Den ter his daddy's Sunday hat, he tuck 'n' hitched de ol' black cat. Now what you reckon made him do dat? Ef you can't tell me word fer word an' spellin' fer spellin' we'll go out an' come in an' take a walk."

He rose, grunting as he did so, thus paying an unintentional tribute to the efficacy of age as the partner of rheumatic aches and stiff joints. "You hear me gruntin'," he remarked—"well, dat's bekaze I ain't de chicky fried by Dicky, which he e't 'nuff fer ter make 'im sicky." As he went out the child took his hand, and went trotting along by his side, thus affording an interesting study for those who concern themselves with the extremes of life. Hand in hand the two went out into the fields, and thence into the great woods, where Uncle Remus, after searching about for some time, carefully deposited his oblong box, remarking: "Ef I don't make no mistakes, dis ain't so mighty fur fum de place whar de creeturs has der playgroun', an' dey ain't no tellin' but what one un um'll creep in dar when deyer playin' hidin', and' ef he do, he'll sho be our meat."

"Oh, it's a trap!" exclaimed the little boy, his face lighting up with enthusiasm.

"An' dey wa'n't nobody here fer ter tell you," Uncle Remus declared, astonishment in his tone. "Well, ef dat don't bang my time, I ain't no free nigger. Now, ef dat had 'a' been yo' pa at de same age, I'd 'a' had ter tell 'im forty-lev'm times, an' den he wouldn't 'a' b'lieved me twel he see sump'n in dar tryin' fer ter git out. Den he'd say it wuz a trap, but not befo'. I ain't blamin' 'im," Uncle Remus went on, "kaze 'taint eve'y chap dat kin tell a trap time he see it, an' mo' dan dat, traps don' allers ketch what dey er sot fer."

He paused, looked all around, and up in the sky, where fleecy clouds were floating lazily along, and in the tops of the trees, where the foliage was swaying gently in the breeze. Then he looked at the little boy. "Ef I ain't gone an' got los'," he said, "we ain't so mighty fur fum de place whar Mr. Man, once 'pon a time—not yo' time ner yit my time, but some time—tuck'n' sot a trap for Brer Rabbit. In dem days, dey hadn't l'arnt how ter be kyarpenters, an' dish yer trap what I'm tellin' you 'bout wuz a great big contraption. Big ez Brer Rabbit wuz, it wuz lots too big fer him.

"Now, whiles Mr. Man wuz fixin' up dis trap, Mr. Rabbit wa'n't so mighty fur off. He hear de saw—er-rash! er-rash!—an' he hear de hammer—bang, bang, bang!—an' he ax hisse'f what all dis racket wuz 'bout. He see Mr. Man come out'n his yard totin' sump'n, an' he got furder off; he see Mr. Man comin' todes de bushes, an' he tuck ter de woods; he see 'im comin' todes de woods, an' he tuck ter de bushes. Mr. Man tote de trap so fur an' no furder. He put it down, he did, an' Brer Rabbit watch 'im; he put in de bait, an' Brer Rabbit watch 'im; he fix de trigger, an' still Brer Rabbit watch 'im. Mr. Man look at de trap an' it satchify him. He look at it an' laugh, an' when he do dat, Brer Rabbit wunk one eye, an' wiggle his mustache, an' chaw his cud.

"An' dat ain't all he do, needer. He sot out in de bushes, he did,

an' study how ter git some game in de trap. He study so hard, an' he got so errytated, dat he thumped his behime foot on de groun' twel it soun' like a cow dancin' out dar in de bushes, but 'twan't no cow, ner yit no calf—'twuz des Brer Rabbit studyin'. Atter so long a time, he put out down de road todes dat part er de country whar mos' er de creeturs live at. Eve'ytime he hear a fuss, he'd dodge in de bushes, kaze he wanter see who comin'. He keep on an' he keep on, an' bimeby he hear ol' Brer Wolf trottin' down de road.

" It so happen dat Brer Wolf wuz de ve'y one what Brer Rabbit wanter see. Dey wuz perlit ter one an'er, but dey wan't no frien'ly feelin' 'twix um. Well, here come ol' Brer Wolf, hongrier dan a chicken-hawk on a frosty mornin', an' ez he come up he see Brer Rabbit set by de side er de road lookin' like he done lose all his fambly an' his friends terboot.

" Dey pass de time er day, an' den Brer Wolf kinder grin an' say, ' Laws-a-massy, Brer Rabbit ! what ail you ? You look like you done had a spell er fever an' ague ; what de trouble ? ' ' Trouble, Brer Wolf ? You ain't never see no trouble twel you git whar I'm at. Maybe you wouldn't min' it like I does, kaze I ain't usen ter it. But I boun' you done seed me light-minded fer de las' time. I'm done—I'm plum wo' out,' sez Brer Rabbit, sezee. Dis make Brer Wolf open his eyes wide. He say, ' Dis de fus' time I ever is hear you talk dat-a-way Brer Rabbit ; take yo' time an' tell me 'bout it. I ain't had my brekkus yit, but dat don't make no diffunce, long ez youer in trouble. I'll he'p you out ef I kin, an' mo' dan dat, I'll put some heart in de work.' When he say dis, he grin an' show his tushes, an' Brer Rabbit kinder edge 'way fum 'im. He say, ' Tell me de trouble, Brer Rabbit, an' I'll do my level bes' fer ter he'p you out.'

" Wid dat, Brer Rabbit 'low dat Mr. Man done been had 'im hired fer ter take keer er his truck patch, an' keep out de minks, de mush-rats an' de weasels. He say dat he done so well settin' up night atter night, when he des might ez well been in bed, dat Mr. Man prommus 'im sump'n extry 'sides de mess er greens what he gun 'im eve'y day. Atter so long a time, he say, Mr. Man 'low dat he gwineter make 'im a present uv a cradle so he kin rock de little Rabs ter sleep when dey cry. So said, so done, he say. Mr. Man make de cradle an' tell Brer Rabbit he kin take it home wid 'im.

" He start out wid it, he say, but it got so heavy he hatter set it down in de woods, an' dat's de reason why Brer Wolf seed 'im settin' down by de side er de road, lookin' like he in deep trouble. Brer Wolf sot down, he did, an' study, an' bimeby he say he'd like mighty well fer ter have a cradle fer his chillun, long ez cradles wuz de style. Brer Rabbit say dey been de style fer de longest, an' ez fer Brer Wolf wantin' one, he say he kin have de one what Mr. Man make fer him, kaze it's lots too big fer his chillun. ' You know how folks is,' sez Brer Rabbit, sezee. ' Dey try ter do what dey dunner how ter do, an' dar's der house bigger dan a barn, an' dar's de fence wid mo' holes

in it dan what dey is in a saine, an' kaze dey have great big chillun dey got de idee dat eve'y cradle what dey make mus' fit der own chillun. An' dat's how come I can't tote de cradle what Mr. Man make fer me mo' dan ten steps at a time.'

" Brer Wolf az Brer Rabbit what he gwineter do fer a cradle, an' Brer Rabbit 'low he kin manage fer ter git 'long wid de ol' one twel he kin 'suade Mr. Man ter make 'im an'er one, an' he don't speck dat'll be so mighty hard ter do. Brer Wolf can't he'p but b'lieve dey's some trick in it, an' he say he ain't see de ol' cradle when las' he wuz at Brer Rabbit house. Wid dat, Brer Rabbit bust out laughin'. He say, ' Dat's been so long back, Brer Wolf, dat I done fergit all 'bout it ; 'sides dat, ef dey wuz a cradle dar, I boun' you my ol' 'oman got better sense dan ter set de cradle in der parler, whar comp'ny comes '; an' he laugh so loud an' long dat he make Brer Wolf right shame er himse'f.

" He 'low, o' Brer Wolfe did, ' Come on, Brer Rabbit, an' show me whar de cradle is. Ef it's too big fer yo' chillun, it'll des 'bout fit mine.' An' so off dey put ter whar Mr. Man done sot his trap. 'Twa'nt so mighty long 'fo' they got whar dey wuz gwine, an' Brer Rabbit say, ' Brer Wolf, dar yo' cradle, an' may it do you mo' good dan it's yever done me ! ' Brer Wolf walk all roun' de trap an' look at it like 'twuz live. Brer Rabbit thump one er his behime foots on de groun' an 'Brer Wolf jump like some un done shot a gun right at 'im. Dis make Brer Rabbit laugh twel he can't laugh no mo'. Brer Wolf, he say he kinder nervous 'bout dat time er de year, an' de leas' little bit er noise 'll make 'im jump. He ax how he gwineter git any purchis on de cradle, an' Brer Rabbit say he'll hatter git inside an' walk wid it on his back, kaze dat de way he done done.

" Brer Wolf ax what all dem contraptions on de inside is, an' Brer Rabbit 'spon' dat dey er de rockers, an' dey ain't no needs fer ter be skeer'd un um, kaze dey ain't nothin' but plain wood. Brer Wolf say he ain't 'zactly skeer'd, but he done got ter de p'int whar he know dat you better look 'fo' you jump. Brer Rabbit 'low dat ef dey's any jumpin' fer ter be done, he de one ter do it, an' he talk like he done fergit what dey come fer. Brer Wolf, he fool an' fumble roun', but bimeby he walk in de cradle, sprung de trigger, an' dar he wuz ! Brer Rabbit, he holler out, ' Come on, Brer Wolf ; des hump yo'se'f, an' I'll be wid you.' But try ez he will an' grunt ez he may, Brer Wolf can't budge dat trap. Bimeby Brer Rabbit git tired er waitin', an' he say dat ef Brer Wolf ain't gwineter come on he's gwine home. He 'low dat a frien' what say he gwineter he'p you, an' den go in a cradle an' drap off ter sleep, dat's all he wanter know 'bout um ; an' wid dat he made fer de bushes, an' he wa'n't a minnit too soon, kaze here come Mr. Man fer ter see ef his trap had been sprung. He look, he did, an', sho 'nuff, it 'uz sprung, an' dey wuz sump'n in dar, too, kaze he kin hear it rustlin' roun' an' kickin' fer ter git out.

" Mr. Man look thoo de crack, an' he see Brer Wolf, which he wuz so skeer'd twel his eye look right green. Mr. Man say, ' Aha ! I got you, is I ? ' Brer Wolf say, ' Who ? ' Mr. Man laugh twel he can't sca'cely talk, an' still Brer Wolf say, ' Who ? Who you think you got ? ' Mr. Man 'low, ' I don't think, I knows. Youer ol' Brer Rabbit, dat's who you is.' Brer Wolf say, ' Turn me outer here, an' I'll show you who I is.' Mr. Man laugh fit ter kill. He 'low, ' You neenter change yo' voice ; I'd know you ef I met you in de dark. Youer Brer Rabbit, dat's who you is.' Brer Wolf say, ' I ain't not ; dat's what I'm not ! '

" Mr. Man look thoo de crack ag'in, an' he see de short years. He 'low, ' You done cut off yo' long years, but still I knows you. Oh, yes ! an' you done sharpen yo' mouf an' put smut on it—but you can't fool me.' Brer Wolf say, ' Nobody ain't tryin' fer ter fool you. Look at my fine long bushy tail.' Mr. Man 'low, ' You done tied an'er tail on behime you, but you can't fool me. Oh no, Brer Rabbit ! You can't fool me." Brer Wolf say, ' Look at de ha'r on my back ; do dat look like Brer Rabbit ? ' Mr. Man 'low, ' You done wallered in de red san', but you can't fool me.'

" Brer Wolf say, ' Look at my long black legs ; do dey look like Brer Rabbit ? ' Mr. Man 'low, ' You kin put an'er j'int in yo' legs, an' you kin smut um, but you can't fool me.' Brer Wolf say, ' Look at my tushes ; does dey look like Brer Rabbit ? ' Mr. Man 'low, ' You done got your toofies, but you can't fool me.' Brer Wolf say, ' Look at my little eyes ; does dey look like Brer Rabbit ? ' Mr. Man 'low, ' You kin squinch yo' eye-balls, but you can't fool me, Brer Rabbit.' Brer Wolf squall out, ' I ain't not Brer Rabbit, an' yo' better turn me out er dis place so I kin take hide an' ha'r off'n Brer Rabbit.' Mr. Man say, ' Ef bofe hide an' ha'r wuz off, I'd know you, kaze 'tain't in you fer ter fool me.' An' it hurt Brer Wolf feelin's so bad fer Mr. Man ter sput his word, dat he bust out inter a big boo-boo, an' dat's 'bout all I know."

" Did the man really and truly think that Brother Wolf was Brother Rabbit ? " asked the little boy.

" When you pin me down dat-a-way," responded Uncle Remus, " I'm bleeze ter tell you dat I ain't too certain an' sho' 'bout dat. De tale come down fum my great-gran'daddy's great-gran'daddy, it come on down ter my daddy, an' des ez he gun it ter me, des dat-a-way I done gun it ter you."

BRER RABBIT AND THE TAR-BABY

JOEL CHANDLER HARRIS

ONE evening recently, the lady whom Uncle Remus calls " Miss Sally " missed her little seven-year-old. Making search for him through the house and through the yard, she heard the sound of voices in the old man's cabin, and looking through the window, saw the child sitting by Uncle Remus. His head rested against the old man's arm, and he was gazing with an expression of the most intense interest into the rough, weather-beaten face that beamed so kindly upon him. This is what " Miss Sally " heard :

" Bimeby, one day, after Brer Fox bin doin' all dat he could fer ter ketch Brer Rabbit, en Brer Rabbit bin doin' all he could fer ter keep 'im fum it, Brer Fox say to hisse'f dat he'd put up a game on Brer Rabbit, en he ain't mo'n got de wuds out'n his mouf twel Brer Rabbit come a-lopin' up de big road, lookin' des ez plump en ez fat en ez sassy ez a Moggin hoss in a barley-patch.

" ' Hol' on dar, Brer Rabbit,' sez Brer Fox, sezee.

" ' I ain't got time, Brer Fox,' sez Brer Rabbit, sezee, sorter mendin' his licks.

" ' I wanter have some confab wid you, Brer Rabbit,' sez Brer Fox, sezee.

" ' All right, Brer Fox, but you better holler fum whar you stan' : I'm monstus full er fleas dis mawnin',' sez Brer Rabbit, sezee.

" ' I seed Brer B'ar yistiddy,' sez Brer Fox, sezee, ' en he sorter raked me over de coals kaze you en me ain't make frens en live naberly, en I told him dat I'd see you.'

" Den Brer Rabbit scratch one year wid his off hine-foot sorter jub'usly, en den he ups en sez, sezee :

" ' All a-settin', Brer Fox. S'posen you drap roun' ter-morrer en take dinner wid me. We ain't got no great doin's at our house, but I speck de ole 'oman en de chilluns kin sort o' scramble roun' en git up sump'n fer ter stay yo' stummuck.'

" ' I'm 'gree'ble, Brer Rabbit,' sez Brer Fox, sezee.

" ' Den I'll 'pen on you,' says Brer Rabbit, sezee.

" Nex' day, Mr. Rabbit an' Miss Rabbit got up soon, 'fo day, en raided on a gyarden like Miss Sally's out dar, en got some cabbiges, en some roas'n-years, en some sparrer-grass, en dey fix up a smashin' dinner. Bimeby one er de little Rabbits, playin' out in de back-

yard, come runnin' in hollerin', 'Oh, ma! oh, ma! I seed Mr. Fox a-comin'!' En den Brer Rabbit he tuck de chilluns by der years en make um set down, and den him en Miss Rabbit sorter dally roun' waitin' for Brer Fox. En dey keep on waitin', but no Brer Fox ain't come. Atter while Brer Rabbit goes to de do', easy like, en peep out, en dar, stickin' out fum behime de cornder, wuz de tip-een' er Brer Fox's tail. Den Brer Rabbit shot de do' en sot down, en put his paws behime his years, en begin fer ter sing:

"'De place wharbouts you spill de grease,
Right dar youer boun' ter slide,
An' whar you fine a bunch er ha'r,
You'll sholy fine de hide!'"

"Nex' day Brer Fox sont word by Mr. Mink en skuze hisse'f kaze he wuz too sick fer ter come, en he ax Brer Rabbit fer ter come en take dinner wid him, en Brer Rabbit say he wuz 'gree'ble.

"Bimeby, w'en de shadders wuz at der shortes', Brer Rabbit he sorter brush up en santer down ter Brer Fox's house, en w'en he got dar he yer somebody groanin', en he look in de do', en dar he see Brer Fox settin' up in a rockin'-cheer all wrop up wid flannil, en he look mighty weak. Brer Rabbit look all roun', he did, but he ain't see no dinner. De dish-pan wuz settin' on de table, en close by wuz a kyarvin-knife.

"'Look like you gwineter have chicken fer dinner, Brer Fox,' sez Brer Rabbit, sezee.

"'Yes, Brer Rabbit, deyer nice en fresh en tender,' sez Brer Fox, sezee.

"Den Brer Rabbit sorter pull his mustarsh, en say, 'You ain't got no' calamus-root, is you, Brer Fox? I done got so now dat I can't eat no' chicken 'ceppin' she's seasoned up wid calamus-root.' En wid dat Brer Rabbit lipt out er de do' and dodge 'mong de bushes, en sot dar watchin' fer Brer Fox; en he ain't watch long, nudder, kaze Brer Fox flung off de flannil en crope out er de house en got whar he could close in on Brer Rabbit, en bimeby Brer Rabbit holler out, 'Oh, Brer Fox! I'll des put yo' calamus-root out yer on dis yer stump. Better come git it while hit's fresh.' And wid dat Brer Rabbit gallop off home. En Brer Fox ain't never kotch 'im yit, en w'at's mo', honey, he ain't gwineter."

"Didn't the fox *never* catch the rabbit, Uncle Remus?" asked the little boy the next evening.

"He come mighty nigh it, honey, sho's you bawn—Brer Fox did. One day arter Brer Rabbit fool 'im wid dat calamus-root, Brer Fox went ter wuk en got 'im some tar, en mix it wid some turken-time, en fix up a contrapshun what he call a Tar-Baby, en he tuck dish yer Tar-Baby en he sot 'er in de big road, en den he lay off in de bushes fer ter see wat de news wuz gwineter be. En he didn't hatter wait long, nudder, kaze bimeby here come Brer Rabbit

pacin' down de road—lippity-clippity, clippity-lippity—des ez sassy ez a jay-bird. Brer Fox he lay low. Brer Rabbit come prancin' 'long twel he spy de Tar-Baby, en den he fotch up on his behime legs like he was 'stonished. De Tar-Baby she sot dar, she did, en Brer Fox he lay low.

"'Mawnin'!' sez Brer Rabbit, sezee; 'nice wedder dis mawnin',' sezee.

"Tar-Baby ain't sayin' nuthin' en Brer Fox he lay low.

"'How duz yo' sym'tums seem ter segashuate?' sez Brer Rabbit, sezee.

"Brer Fox he wink his eye slow, en lay low, en de Tar-Baby she ain't sayin' nuthin'.

"'How you come on, den? Is you deaf?' sez Brer Rabbit, sezee. 'Kaze if you is I kin holler louder,' sezee.

"Tar-Baby lay still, en Brer Fox he lay low.

"'Youer stuck up, dat's w'at you is,' says Brer Rabbit, sezee, 'en I'm gwineter kyore you, dat's w'at I'm a-gwineter do,' sezee.

"Brer Fox he sorter chuckle in his stummuck, he did, but Tar-Baby ain't sayin' nuthin'.

"'I'm gwineter larn you howter talk ter 'specttubble fokes ef hit's de las 'ack,' sez Brer Rabbit, sezee. 'Ef you don't take off dat hat en tell me howdy, I'm gwineter bus' you wide open,' sezee.

"Tar-Baby stay still, en Brer Fox he lay low.

"Brer Rabbit keep on axin' 'im, en de Tar-Baby she keep on sayin' nuthin', twel present'y Brer Rabbit draw back wid his fis', he did, en blip he tuck er side er de head. Right dar's whar he broke his merlasses-jug. His fis' stuck, en he can't pull loose. De tar hilt him. But Tar-Baby she stay still, en Brer Fox he lay low.

"'Ef you don't lemme loose, I'll knock you ag'in,' sez Brer Rabbit, sezee; en wid dat he fotch 'er a wipe wid te udder han', en dat stuck. Tar-Baby she ain't sayin' nuthin', en Brer Fox he lay low.

"'Tu'n me loose, fo' I kick de natal stuffin' outen you,' sez Brer Rabbit, sezee; but de Tar-Baby she ain't sayin' nuthin'. She des hilt on, en den Brer Rabbit lose de use er his feet in de same way. Brer Fox he lay low. Den Brer Rabbit squall out dat ef de Tar-Baby don't tu'n 'im loose he butt 'er crank-sided. En den he butted, en his head got stuck. Den Brer Fox he santered fort', lookin' des ez innercent ez wunner yo' mammy's mockin'-birds.

"'Howdy, Brer Rabbit?' sez Brer Fox, sezee. 'You look sorter stuck up dis mawnin',' sezee; en den he rolled on de groun', en laft en laft twel he couldn't laff no mo'. 'I speck you'll take dinner wid me dis time, Brer Rabbit. I done laid in some calamus-root, en I ain't gwineter take no skuse,' sez Brer Fox, sezee."

Here Uncle Remus paused, and drew a two-pound yam out of the ashes.

" Did the fox eat the rabbit ? " asked the little boy to whom the story had been told.

" Dat's all de fur de tale goes," replied the old man. " He mout, en den ag'in he moutent. Some say Jedge B'ar come 'long en loosed 'im ; some say he didn't. I hear Miss Sally callin'. You better run 'long." . . .

" Uncle Remus," said the little boy one evening, when he had found the old man with little or nothing to do, " did the fox kill and eat the rabbit when he caught him with the Tar-Baby ? "

" Law, honey, ain't I tell you 'bout dat ? " replied the old darky, chuckling slyly. " I 'clar ter grashus I ought er tole you dat ; but ole man Nod wuz ridin' on my eyelids twel a leetle mo'n I'd 'a' dis'member'd my own name, en den on to dat here come yo' mammy hollerin' atter you.

" W'at I tell you w'en I fus' begin ? I tole you Brer Rabbit wuz a monstus soon beas' ; leas'ways dat's w'at I laid out fer ter tell you. Well, den, honey, don't you go en make no udder kalkalashuns, kaze in dem days Brer Rabbit en his family wuz at de head er de gang w'en enny racket wuz on han', en dar dey stayed. 'Fo' you begins fer ter wipe yo' eyes 'bout Brer Rabbit, you wait en see whar'bouts Brer Rabbit gwineter fetch up at. But dat's needer yer ner dar.

" W'en Brer Fox fine Brer Rabbit mixt up wid de Tar-Baby, he feel mighty good, en he roll on de groun' en laff. Bimeby he up 'n' say, sezee :

" ' Well, I speck I got you dis time, Brer Rabbit,' sezee ; ' maybe I ain't but I speck I is. You been runnin' roun' here sassin' atter me a mighty long time, but I speck you done come ter de een' er de row. You bin cuttin' up yo' capers en bouncin' roun' in dis naberhood ontwel you come ter b'leeve yo'se'f de boss er de whole gang. En den youer allers some'rs whar you got no bizness,' sez Brer Fox, sezee. ' Who ax you fer ter come en strike up a 'quaintence wid dish yer Tar-Baby ? En who stuck you up dar whar you iz ? Nobody in de roun' worril. You des tuck en jam yo'se'f on dat Tar-Baby widout waitin' fer enny invite,' sez Brer Fox, sezee—' en dar you is, en dar you'll stay twel I fixes up a bresh-pile and fires her up, kaze I'm gwineter bobbycue you dis day, sho',' sez Brer Fox, sezee.

" Den Brer Rabbit talk mighty 'umble.

" ' I don't keer w'at you do wid me, Brer Fox,' sezee, ' so you don't fling me in dat brier-patch. Roas' me, Brer Fox,' sezee, ' but don't fling me in dat brier-patch,' sezee.

" ' Hit's so much trouble fer ter kindle a fier,' sez Brer Fox, sezee, ' dat I speck I'll hatter hang you,' sezee.

" ' Hang me des ez high ez you please, Brer Fox,' sez Brer Rabbit, sezee, ' but do fer de Lord's sake don't fling me in dat brier-patch,' sezee.

" ' I ain't got no string,' sez Brer Fox, sezee, ' en now I speck I'll hatter drown you,' sezee.

" ' Drown me ez deep ez you please, Brer Fox,' sez Brer Rabbit, sezee, ' but don't fling me in dat brier-patch,' sezee.

" ' Dey ain't no water nigh,' sez Brer Fox, sezee, ' en now I speck I'll hatter skin you,' sezee.

" ' Skin me, Brer Fox,' sez Brer Rabbit, sezee, ' snatch out my eyeballs, t'ar out my years by de roots, en cut off my legs,' sezee, ' but do please, Brer Fox, don't fling me in dat brier-patch,' sezee.

" Co'se Brer Fox wanter hurt Brer Rabbit bad ez he kin, so he cotch him by de behime legs en slung 'im right in de middle er de brier-patch. Dar wuz a considerbul flutter whar Brer Rabbit struck de bushes, en Brer Fox sorter hung roun' fer ter see what wuz gwineter happen. Bimeby he hear somebody call 'im, en way up de hill he see Brer Rabbit settin' cross-legged on a chinkapin log koamin' de pitch outen his har wid a chip. Den Brer Fox know dat he bin swop off mighty bad. Brer Rabbit wuz bleedzed fer ter fling back some er his sass, en he holler out :

" ' Bred en bawn in a brier-patch, Brer Fox ; bred en bawn in a brier-patch ! ' en wid dat he skip out des ez lively ez a cricket in de embers."

KATHERINE S. B. McDOWELL

1849–1883

HIERONYMUS POP AND THE BABY

"Now, 'Onymus Pop," said the mother of that gentle boy, "you jis take care of dis chile while I'm gone to the hangin'. An' don't you leave dis house on no account, not if de skies fall an' de earth opens to swaller yer."

Hieronymus grunted gloomily. He thought it a burning shame that he should not go to the hanging; but never had his mother been willing that he should have the least pleasure in life. It was either to tend the baby, or mix the cow's food, or to card wool, or cut wood, or to pick a chicken, or wash up the floor, or to draw water, or to sprinkle down the clothes—always something. When everything else failed, she had a way, that seemed to her son simply demoniac, of setting him at the alphabet. To be sure, she did not know the letters herself, but her teaching was none the less vigorous.

"What's dat, 'Onymus?" she would say, pointing at random with her snuff brush to a letter.

"Q"—with a sniff.

Woe be unto young Pop if he faltered, and said it *might* be a Z. Mother Pop kept a rod ready, and used it as if she was born for nothing else. Naturally, he soon learned to stick brazenly to his first guess. But unfortunately he could not remember from one day to another what he had said; and his mother learned, after a time, to distinguish the forms of the letters, and to know that a curly letter called S on Tuesday could not possibly be a square-shaped E on Thursday. Her faith once shattered, 'Onymus had to suffer in the usual way.

The lad had been taught at spasmodic intervals by his sister Savannah—commonly called Sissy—who went to school, put on airs, and was always clean. Therefore Hieronymus hated her. Mother Pop herself was a little in awe of her accomplished daughter, and would ask her no questions, even when most in doubt as to which was which of the letters G and C.

"A pretty thing!" she would mutter to herself, "if I must be

a-learnin' things from my own chile, dat wuz' de mos' colicky baby I ever had, an' cos' me unheerd-of miseries in de time of her teethin'."

It seemed to Hieronymus that the climax of his impositions had come, when he was forced to stay at home and mind the baby, while his mother and the rest of them trotted off, gay as larks, to see a man hanged. It was a hot afternoon, and the unwilling nurse suffered. The baby wouldn't go to sleep. He put it on the bed—a feather-bed—and why it didn't drop off to sleep, as a proper baby should, was more than the tired soul of Hieronymus could tell. He did everything to soothe Tiddlekins. (The infant had not been named as yet, and by way of affection they addressed it as Tiddlekins.) He even went so far as to wave the flies away from it with a mulberry branch for the space of five or ten minutes. But as it still fretted and tossed, he let it severely alone, and the flies settled on the little black thing as if it had been a licorice stick.

After a while Tiddlekins grew aggressive, and began to yell. Hieronymus, who had almost found consolation in the contemplation of a bloody picture pasted on the wall, cut from the weekly paper of a wicked city, was deprived even of this solace. He picked up " de miserable little screech-owl," as he called it in his wrath. He trotted it. He sang to it the soothing ditty of—

" 'Tain't never gwine to rain no mo' ;
Sun shines down on rich and po'."

But all was vain. Finally, in despair, he undressed Tiddlekins. He had heard his mother say : ' Of'en and of'en when a chile is ascream' its breff away, 't ain't nothin' ails it 'cep'n *pins*."

But there were no pins. Plenty of strings and hard knots ; but not a pin to account for the antics of the unhappy Tiddlekins.

How it *did* scream ! It lay on the stiffly braced knees of Hieronymus, and puckered up its face so tightly that it looked as if it had come fresh from a wrinkle mould. There were no tears, but sharp regular yells, and rollings of its head, and a distracting monotony in its performances.

" Dis here chile looks 's if it's got de measles," muttered Hi, gazing on the squirming atom with calm eyes of despair. Then, running his fingers over the neck and breast of the small Tiddlekins, he cried, with the air of one who makes a discovery, " It's got de heat ! *Dat's* what ails Tiddlekins ! "

There was really a little breaking out on the child's body that might account for his restlessness and squalls. And it was *such* a hot day ! Perspiration streamed down Hi's back, while his head was dry. There was not a quiver in the tree leaves, and the silver poplars showed only their leaden side. The sunflowers were drooping their big heads ; the flies seemed to stick to the window-panes, and were too languid to crawl.

Hieronymus had in him the materials of which philosophers are made. He said to himself, " 'Tain't nothin' but heat dat's de matter wid dis baby ; so uf *cose* he ought to be cooled off."

But how to cool him off—that was the great question. Hi knitted his dark brows and thought intently.

It happened that the chiefest treasure of the Pop estate was a deep old well, that in the hottest days yielded water as refreshing as iced champagne. The neighbours all made a convenience of the Pop well. And half-way down its long cool hollow hung, pretty much all of the time, milk cans, butter pats, fresh meats—all things that needed to be kept cool in summer days. He looked at the hot, squirming, wretched black baby on his lap ; then he looked at the well ; and, simple, straightforward lad that he was, he put this and that together.

" If I was ter hang Tiddlekins down de well," he reflected, " 't wouldn't be mo' dan three jumps of a flea befo' he's as cool as Christmas." With this quick-witted youth to think was to act. Before many minutes he had stuffed poor little Tiddlekins into the well bucket, though it must be mentioned to his credit that he tied the baby securely in with his own suspenders.

Warmed up with his exertions, content in this good riddance of such bad rubbish as Tiddlekins, Hieronymus reposed himself on the feather-bed, and dropped off into a sweet slumber. From this he was aroused by the voice of a small boy.

" Hello, Hi ! I say, Hi Pop ! whar is yer ? "

" Here I is," cried Hi, starting up. " What you want ? "

Little Jim Rogers stood in the doorway. " Towzer's dog," he said, in great excitement, " and daddy's bull-pup is gwine ter have a fight dis evenin'. Come on quick, if yer wants ter see de fun."

Up jumped Hi, and the two boys were off like a flash. *Not one thought to Tiddlekins in the well bucket.*

In due time the Pop family got home, and Mother Pop, fanning herself, was indulging in the moral reflections suitable to the occasion, when she checked herself suddenly, exclaiming, " But, land o' Jerusalem ! whar's 'Onymus an' de baby ? "

" I witnessed Hieronymus," said the elegant Savannah, " as I wandered from school. He was with a multitude of boys, who cheered, without a sign of disap*per*ation, two canine beasts, that tore each other in deadly feud."

" Yer don't mean ter say, Sissy, dat 'Onymus Pop is gone ter a dog-fight ? "

" Such are my meaning," said Sissy, with dignity.

" Den *whar's* de baby ? " For answer, a long low wail smote upon their ears, as Savannah would have said.

" Fan me ! " cried Mother Pop. " Dat's Tiddlekins' voice."

" Never min' about fannin' mammy," cried Weekly, Savannah's twin, a youth of fifteen, who could read, and was much addicted

to gory tales of thunder and blood; "let's fin' de baby. P'r'aps he's been murdered by dat ruffian Hi, an' dat's his *ghos'* dat we hears a-callin'."

A search was instituted—under the bed, in the bed, in the wash-tub and the soup kettle; behind the wood-pile, in the pea vines; up the chimney, and in the ash-hopper; but all in vain. No Tiddlekins appeared, though still they heard him cry.

"Shade of Ole Hickory!" cried father Pop, "whar, whar is dat chile?" Then, with a sudden lighting of the eye: "Unchain de dog," said he; "he'll smell him out."

There was a superannuated bloodhound pertaining to the Pop ménage that they kept tied up all day under a delusion that he was fierce. They unchained this wild animal, and with many kicks endeavoured to goad his nostrils to their duty.

It happened that a piece of fresh pork hung in the well, and Lord Percy—so was the dog called—was hungry. So he hurried with vivacity towards the fresh pork.

"De well!" shrieked Mother Pop, tumbling down all in a heap, and looking somehow like Turner's "Slave-Ship," as one stumpy leg protruded from the wreck of red flannel and ruffled petticoats.

"What shall we do?" said Sissy, with a helpless squeak.

"Why, git him out," said Mr. Pop, who was the practical one of the family.

He began to draw up the well bucket, aided by Weekly, who whispered darkly: "Dar'll be anudder hangin' in town befo' long, *and Hi won't miss dat hangin'*."

Soon appeared a little woolly hat, then half a black body, the rest of him being securely wedged in the well bucket. He looked like a jack-in-the-box. But he was cool, Tiddlekins was, no doubt of that. Mother Pop revived at sight of her offspring, still living, and feebly sucking his thumb.

"Ef we had a whisky bath ter put him in!" she cried.

Into the house flew Father Pop, seized the quart cup, and was over to the white house on the hill in the wink of a cat's eye.

"He stammered forth his piteous tale," said Savannah, telling the story the next day to her schoolmates; "and Judge Chambers himself filled his cup with the best of Bourbon, and Miss Clara came over to see us resusirate the infant."

Mother Pop had Tiddlekins wrapped in hot flannel when he got back; and with a never-to-be-sufficiently-admired economy Mr. Pop moistened a rag with "the best of Bourbon," and said to his wife, "Jes rub him awhile, Cynthy, an' see if dat won't bring him roun'."

As she rubbed, he absent-mindedly raised the quart cup to his lips, and with three deep and grateful gulps the whisky bath went to refresh the inner man of Tiddlekins' papa.

Then who so valorous and so affectionate as he? Dire were his

threats against Hieronymus, deep his lamentations over his child.

"My po' little lammie!" he sobbed. "Work away, Cynthy. Dat chile mus' be saved, even if I should have ter go over ter de judge's for anudder quart o' whisky. Nuthin' shall be spared to save that preciousest kid o' my ole age."

Miss Clara did not encourage his self-sacrificing proposal; but for all that, it was not long before Tiddlekins grew warm and lively, and winked at his father—so that good old man declared—as he lay on his back, placidly sucking a pig's tail. Savannah had roasted it in the ashes, and it had been cut from the piece of pork that had shared the well with Tiddlekins. The pork belonged to a neighbour, by the way; but at such a time the Pop family felt that they might dispense with the vain and useless ceremony of asking for it.

The excitement was over, the baby asleep, Miss Clara gone, and the sun well on its way to China, when a small figure was seen hovering about the gate. It had a limp air of dejection, and seemed to feel some delicacy about coming further.

"The miscreant is got back," remarked Savannah.

"Hironymus," calls Mrs. Pop, "you may thank yo' heavenly stars dat you ain't a murderer dis summer day——"

"A-waitin' ter be hung nex' wild-grape-time," finished Weekly pleasantly.

Mr. Pop said nothing. But he reached down from the mantelshelf a long thin something, shaped like a snake, and quivered it in the air.

Then he walked out to Hi, and taking him by the left ear, led him to the wood-pile. And here——But I draw a veil.

LAFCADIO HEARN
1850–1904

THE SOUL OF THE GREAT BELL

THE water-clock marks the hour in the *Tachung sz'*, in the Tower of the Great Bell: now the mallet is lifted to smite the lips of the metal monster—the vast lips inscribed with Buddhist texts from the sacred *Fa-hwa-King*, from the chapters of the holy *Ling-yen-King!* Hear the great bell responding!—how mighty her voice, though tongueless! *KO-NGAI!* All the little dragons on the high-tilted eaves of the green roofs shiver to the tips of their gilded tails under that deep wave of sound; all the porcelain gargoyles tremble on their carven perches; all the hundred little bells of the pagodas quiver with desire to speak. *KO-NGAI*—all the green-and-gold tiles of the temple are vibrating; the wooden goldfish above them are writhing against the sky; the uplifted finger of Fo shakes high over the heads of the worshippers through the blue fog of incense! *KO-NGAI!*—What a thunder tone was that! All the lacquered goblins on the palace cornices wriggle their fire-coloured tongues! And after each huge shock, how wondrous the multiple echo and the great golden moan, and, at last, the sudden sibilant sobbing in the ears when the immense tone faints away in broken whispers of silver, as though a woman should whisper, "*Hiai!*" Even so the great bell hath sounded every day for well-nigh five hundred years—*Ko-Ngai:* first with stupendous clang, then with immeasurable moan of gold, then with silver murmuring of "*Hiai!*" And there is not a child in all the many-coloured ways of the old Chinese city who does not know the story of the great bell, who cannot tell you why the great bell says *Ko-Ngai* and *Hiai!*

Now this is the story of the great bell in the *Tachung sz'*, as the same is related in the *Pe-Hiao-Tou-Choue*, written by the learned Yu-Pao-Tchen, of the City of Kwang-tchau-fu.

. . . . . .

Nearly five hundred years ago the Celestially August, the Son of Heaven, Yong-Lo, of the "Illustrious" or Ming dynasty, commanded the worthy official Kouan-Yu that he should have a bell made of such size that the sound thereof might be heard for one hundred *li*. And he further ordained that the voice of the bell should

be strengthened with brass, and deepened with gold, and sweetened with silver; and that the face and the great lips of it should be graven with blessed sayings from the sacred books, and that it should be suspended in the centre of the imperial capital to sound through all the many-coloured ways of the City of Pe-King.

Therefore the worthy mandarin Kouan-Yu assembled the master-moulders and the renowned bellsmiths of the empire, and all men of great repute and cunning in foundry work; and they measured the materials for the alloy, and treated them skilfully, and prepared the moulds, the fires, the instruments, and the monstrous melting-pot for fusing the metal. And they laboured exceedingly, like giants neglecting only rest and sleep and the comforts of life; toiling both night and day in obedience to Kouan-Yu, and striving in all things to do the behest of the Son of Heaven.

But when the metal had been cast, and the earthen mould separated from the glowing casting, it was discovered that, despite their great labour and ccaseless care, the result was void of worth; for the metals had rebelled one against the other—the gold had scorned alliance with the brass, the silver would not mingle with the molten iron. Therefore the moulds had to be once more prepared, and the fires rekindled, and the metal remelted, and all the work tediously and toilsomely repeated. The Son of Heaven heard and was angry, but spake nothing.

A second time the bell was cast, and the result was even worse. Still the metals obstinately refused to blend one with the other; and there was no uniformity in the bell, and the sides of it were cracked and fissured, and the lips of it were slagged and split asunder; so that all the labour had to be repeated even a third time, to the great dismay of Kouan-Yu. And when the Son of Heaven heard these things, he was angrier than before; and sent his messenger to Kouan-Yu with a letter, written upon lemon-coloured silk and sealed with the seal of the dragon, containing these words:

"From the Mighty Yong-Lo, the Sublime Tait-Sung, the Celestial and August, whose reign is called 'Ming,' to Kouan-Yu the Fuh-yin: Twice thou hast betrayed the trust we have deigned graciously to place in thee; if thou fail a third time in fulfilling our command, thy head shall be severed from thy neck. Tremble, and obey!"

. . . . . .

Now, Kouan-Yu had a daughter of dazzling loveliness whose name —Ko-Ngai—was ever in the mouths of poets, and whose heart was even more beautiful than her face. Ko-Ngai loved her father with such love that she had refused a hundred worthy suitors rather than make his home desolate by her absence; and when she had seen the awful yellow missive, sealed with the Dragon-Seal, she fainted away with fear for her father's sake. And when her senses and her strength returned to her, she could not rest or sleep for thinking of her parent's danger, until she had secretly sold some of her jewels, and

with the money so obtained had hastened to an astrologer, and paid him a great price to advise her by what means her father might be saved from the peril impending over him. So the astrologer made observations of the heavens, and marked the aspect of the Silver Stream (which we call the Milky Way), and examined the signs of the Zodiac—the *Hwang-tao*, or Yellow Road—and consulted the table of the Five *Hin*, or Principles of the Universe, and the mystical books of the alchemists. And after a long silence, he made answer to her, saying: "Gold and brass will never meet in wedlock, silver and iron never will embrace, until the flesh of a maiden be melted in the crucible; until the blood of a virgin be mixed with the metals in their fusion." So Ko-Ngai returned home sorrowful at heart; but she kept secret all that she had heard, and told no one what she had done.

. . . . . .

At last came the awful day when the third and last effort to cast the great bell was to be made; and Ko-Ngai, together with her waiting-woman, accompanied her father to the foundry, and they took their places upon a platform overlooking the toiling of the moulders and the lava of liquefied metal. All the workmen wrought at their tasks in silence; there was no sound heard but the muttering of the fires. And the muttering deepened into a roar like the roar of typhoons approaching, and the blood-red lake of metal slowly brightened like the vermilion of a sunrise, and the vermilion was transmuted into a radiant glow of gold, and the gold whitened blindingly, like the silver face of a full moon. Then the workers ceased to feed the raving flame, and all fixed their eyes upon the eyes of Kouan-Yu; and Kouan-Yu prepared to give the signal to cast.

But ere ever he lifted his finger, a cry caused him to turn his head and all heard the voice of Ko-Ngai sounding sharply sweet as a bird's song above the great thunder of the fires—"*For thy sake, O my father!*" And even as she cried, she leaped into the white flood of metal; and the lava of the furnace roared to receive her, and spattered monstrous flakes of flame to the roof, and burst over the verge of the earthen crater, and cast up a whirling fountain of many-coloured fires, and subsided quakingly, with lightnings and with thunders and with mutterings.

Then the father of Ko-Ngai, wild with his grief, would have leaped in after her, but that strong men held him back and kept firm grasp upon him until he had fainted away, and they could bear him like one dead to his home. And the serving-woman of Ko-Ngai, dizzy and speechless for pain, stood before the furnace, still holding in her hands a shoe, a tiny, dainty shoe, with embroidery of pearls and flowers—the shoe of her beautiful mistress that was. For she had sought to grasp Ko-Ngai by the foot as she leaped, but had only been able to clutch the shoe, and the pretty shoe came off in her

hand ; and she continued to stare at it like one gone mad.

. . . . . .

But in spite of all these things, the command of the Celestial and August had to be obeyed, and the work of the moulders to be finished, hopeless as the result might be. Yet the glow of the metal seemed purer and whiter than before ; and there was no sign of the beautiful body that had been entombed therein. So the ponderous casting was made ; and lo ! when the metal had become cool, it was found that the bell was beautiful to look upon and perfect in form, and wonderful in colour above all other bells. Nor was there any trace found of the body of Ko-Ngai ; for it had been totally absorbed by the precious alloy, and blended with the well-blended brass and gold, with the intermingling of the silver and the iron. And when they sounded the bell, its tones were found to be deeper and mellower and mightier than the tones of any other bell, reaching even beyond the distance of one hundred *li*, like a pealing of summer thunder ; and yet also like some vast voice uttering a name, a woman's name, the name of Ko-Ngai.

. . . . . .

And still, between each mighty stroke there is a long low moaning heard ; and ever the moaning ends with a sound of sobbing and of complaining, as though a weeping woman should murmur, *" Hiai ! "* And still, when the people hear that great golden moan they keep silence, but when the sharp, sweet shuddering comes in the air, and the sobbing of *" Hiai ! "* then, indeed, do all the Chinese mothers in all the many-coloured ways of Pe-King whisper to their little ones : *" Listen ! that is Ko-Ngai crying for her shoe ! That is Ko-Ngai calling for her shoe ! "*

MARY STEWART CUTTING

1851–1924

THE HAPPIEST TIME

"AREN'T you coming to church with me this morning?"

"Well—not *this* morning, I think, petty."

"You *said* you would."

"Yes, I know I did, but I have a slight cold. I don't think it would be best for me, really, petty. I've been working pretty hard this week." Mr. Belmore carefully deposited a pile of newspapers beside his armchair upon the floor of the little library, removing and opening the top layer for perusal as he spoke, his eyes already glued to the headlines. "A quiet day will do me lots of good. I'll tell you what it is—I'll promise to go with you next Sunday if you say so."

"You always promise you'll go next Sunday." Mrs. Belmore, a brown-haired, clear-eyed young woman in a blue and white spotted morning gown looked doubtfully, yet with manifest yielding, at her husband. Mr. Belmore presented the radiantly clean and peaceful aspect of the man who has risen at nine o'clock instead of the customary seven, and bathed and dressed in the sweet unhurried calm that belongs only to the first day of the week, poking dilatorily among chiffonier drawers, discovering hitherto forgotton garments in his closet, and leisurely fumbling over a change of shirt-studs before coming down to consume the breakfast kept waiting for him.

"Of course I know it's your only day at home—" Mrs. Belmore reverted to her occupation of deftly setting the chairs in their rightful places, and straightening the books on the tables. "I suppose I *ought* to insist on your going—when you promised—but still—" She gave a sigh of relinquishment. "I suppose you *do* need the rest," she added. "We can have a nice afternoon together, anyway. You can finish reading that story aloud, and we'll go out and take a good look at the garden. I think the beans were planted too close under the pear tree last year—that was the reason they didn't come up right. Edith Barnes and Alan Wilson are coming out from town after dinner for the rest of the day, but that won't make any difference to us."

"*What?*"

"Now, Herbert, how could I help asking them? You know the boarding-house she and her mother live in. Edith never gets a chance to see him alone. They're saving up now to get married—

they've been engaged a year—so he can't spend any more money for theatres and things, and they just have to walk and walk the streets, unless they go visiting, and they've been almost everywhere, Edith says. She wrote and asked me to have them for this Sunday ; he's been away for a whole week somewhere up in the State. I think it pathetic." In the warmth of explanation Mrs. Belmore had unwittingly removed the pile of newspapers from the floor to an ottoman at the farther end of the room. " Edith says she knows it's the happiest time of their lives, and she does want to get some of the benefit of it, poor girl."

" What do they want to be engaged for anyway ? "

" *Herbert !* How ridiculous ! You are the most unreasonable man at times for a sensible one that I ever laid my eyes on. Why did *we* want to be engaged ? "

" That was different." Mr. Belmore's tone conveyed a permanent satisfaction with his own case. " If every woman were like you, petty—I never *could* stand Edith, she's one of your clever girls ; there's something about her that always sets my teeth on edge. As for Wilson—oh, Wilson's just a usual kind of a fool, like myself. Hello, where are my newspapers—and what in thunder makes it so cold ? You don't mean to say you've got the window open ? "

Mrs. Belmore had a habit of airing the rooms in the morning, which her husband approved of theoretically, and combated intensely in practice. After the window was banged shut she could hear him rattling at the furnace below to turn on an extra flow of heat before settling down once more in comfort. Although the April sun was bright, there was still a chill in the air.

She looked in upon him, gowned and bonneted for church, sweet and placid of mien, followed by two little girls, brave in their Sunday best, all big hats and ribboned hair and little starchy ruffles showing below their brown coats. Mrs. Belmore stooped over her husband's chair to kiss him good-bye.

" You won't have to talk to Edith and Alan at all," she said, as if continuing the conversation from where they had left off. " All we have to do is to let them have the parlour or the library. They'll entertain each other."

" Oh, don't you bother about that. Now go ahead or you'll be late ; and don't forget to say your prayers for me, too. That's right always go to church with your mother, girlies."

" I *wish* you were going, too." Mrs. Belmore looked at her husband lingeringly.

" I wish I were, petty," said Mr. Belmore, with a prompt mendacity so evidently inspired by affection that his wife condoned it at once.

She thought of him more than once during the service with generous satisfaction in his comfortable morning. She wished she had thought it right to remain at home, too, as she did sometimes, but there were the children to be considered. But she and Herbert

would have the afternoon together, and take part of it to see about planting the garden, a plot of twenty feet square in the rear of the suburban villa.

The Sunday visit to the garden was almost a sacrament. They might look at it on other days, but it was only on Sunday, beginning with the early spring, that husband and wife strolled around the little patch together, first planning where to start the summer crop of vegetables and afterward watching the green things poking their spikes up through the mould, and growing, growing. He did the planting and working in the long light evenings after he came home, while she held the papers of seeds for him; but it was only on Sunday that he could really watch the green things grow, and learn to know each separate leaf intimately, and count the blossoms on the beans and the cucumbers. From the pure pleasure of the first radish, through all the various wiltings and shrivellings incident to amateur gardening in summer deluge and drought, to the triumphant survival of tomato plants and cucumber vines, running riot over everything in the fall of the year, the little garden played its old part as paradise to these two, who became more fully one in the watching of the miracle of growth. When they gathered the pears from the little tree in the corner of the plot, before the frost, and picked the few little green tomatoes that remained on the dwindling stems, it was like garnering a store of peaceful happiness. Every stage of the garden was a romance. Mrs. Belmore could go to church without her husband, but to have him survey the garden without her would have been the touch beyond.

It must be horrid, anyway, she thought, to have to go every morning into town in those smoky cars and crowded ferry-boats; just to run into town twice a week tired her out. Now he would have finished his paper—now little Dorothy would have come in, red-cheeked from her walk, to kiss daddy before her nap—now he must be pottering around among his possessions and looking out for her. She knew so well how he would look when he came to the door to meet her. The sudden sight of either one to the other always shed a reflected light, like the glow of the sun. It was with a feeling of wonder that she marked its disappearance, after a brief gleam, as he not only opened the door, but came out on the piazza to greet her, and closed it behind him.

"They're in there—Edith and Alan." He pointed over his shoulder with his thumb. "I thought they weren't coming until after dinner."

"Why they weren't."

"Well, they're in the parlour, just the same. Came out over an hour ago. Great Scot, I wished I'd gone with you. I'm worn out."

"You don't mean to say you've stayed with them all the time!" Mrs. Belmore looked scandalised.

"I should say I had; I couldn't lose 'em. Whichever room I

went to they followed ; at least she did and he came after. I went from pillar to post, I give you my word, petty, but Edith had me by the neck ; she never let go her grip for an instant. They won't speak to each other, you see ; only to me. I haven't had a chance to even finish the paper. I've had the deuce of a time ! I don't know what you are going to do about it."

" Never mind ; it will be all right now," said Mrs. Belmore reassuringly. She pushed past him into the parlour, where sat a tall, straight girl with straight, light brows, a long straight nose, and a straight mouth with a droop at the corners. In the room beyond, a thickset, dark young man with glasses and a nervous expression was looking at pictures. It did not require a Solomon to discover at a glance how the land lay.

If Mrs. Belmore had counted easily on her powers of conciliation, she was disappointed this time. After the dinner, whereat the conversation was dragged laboriously round four sides of a square, except when the two little girls made some slight diversion, and the several futile attempts when the meal was over to leave the lovers alone together, Mrs. Belmore resigned herself, perforce, to the loss of her cherished afternoon.

" It's no use ; we'll have to give up the reading," she said to her husband rapidly, in one of her comings and goings. " Perhaps later, dear. But it's really dreadful ; here we've been talking of religion and beet-root sugar and smallpox, when any one can see that her heart is breaking."

" I think he is getting the worst of it," said Mr. Belmore impartially.

" Oh, it won't hurt *him*."

" Well, you've given them plenty of opportunities to make up."

" Yes ; but he doesn't know how."

She added in a louder tone, " You take Mr. Wilson up to your den for a while, Herbert ; Edith and I are going to have a cosy little time with the children ; aren't we, dear ? "

" Have a cigar ? " said Mr. Belmore as the two men seated themselves comfortably in a couple of wooden armchairs in the sunny little apartment hung with a miscellaneous collection of guns, swords, and rods, the drawing of a bloated trout, and a dusty pair of antlers.

" Thank you ; I'm not smoking now," said Mr. Wilson, with a hungry look at the open box on the table beside him.

" Oh ! " said his host genially, " so you're at that stage of the game. Well, I've been there myself. You have my sympathy. But this won't last, you know."

" Does your wife like smoking ? "

" Loves it," said Mr. Belmore, sinking the fact of his official limit to four cigars a day. " That is, of course, she thinks it's a dirty habit, and unhealthy, and all that sort of thing, you know ; but it doesn't make any *difference* to her—not a pin's worth. Cheer up,

old fellow; you'll get to this place, too."

"Looks like it," said the other bitterly. "Here I haven't seen her for a week—I came two hundred miles on purpose yesterday, and now she won't even look at me. I don't know what's the matter—haven't the least idea—and I can't *get* her to tell me. I have to be off to-morrow at seven o'clock, too—I call it pretty hard lines."

"Let me see," said Mr. Belmore judicially, knitting his brows as if burrowing into the past as he smoked. "Perhaps I can help you out. What have you been writing to her? Telling her all about what you've been doing, and just sending your love at the end? They don't like that, you know."

Mr. Wilson shook his head. "No; upon my soul, I've done nothing but tell her how I—how I was looking forward to—oh, hang it, Belmore, the letters have been all *right*, I know that."

"H'm," said Mr. Belmore, "there's got to be *something* back of it, you know. Seen any girls since you've been gone?"

Mr. Wilson hastened to shake his head more emphatically than before. "Not one," he asseverated, with the relief of complete innocence. "Didn't even meet a soul I knew, except Brower—you remember Dick Brower? I went into a jeweller's to get my glasses mended, and found him buying a souvenir spoon for his fiancée."

"O—o—h!" said Mr. Belmore intelligently, "and did you buy a present for Edith?"

"No, I didn't. She made me promise not to buy anything more for her; she thinks I'm spending too much money, and that I ought to economise."

"And did you tell her about Brower?"

"Why, of course I did—as we were coming out this morning."

Mr. Wilson stared blankly at his friend.

"Chump!" said Mr. Belmore. He bit off the end of a new cigar and threw it away. "Wilson, my poor fellow, you're so besotted in ignorance that I don't know how to let the light in on you. A man is a fool by the side of his fiancée, anyhow."

"I don't know what you mean," said the bewildered Wilson stiffly. "*I* don't know what I'm to do."

"No, of course you don't—but Edith does—you can just trust her for that. A girl *always* knows what a man ought to do—she can give him cards and spades and beat him every time."

"Then why doesn't she *tell* me what she wants? I asked her to, particularly."

"Oh, no! She'll tell you everything the opposite—that is, half the time. She'll put every obstacle possible in your way, to see if you're man enough to walk over 'em; that's what she wants to find out; if you're man enough to have your own way in spite of her; and, of course, if you aren't, you're an awful disappointment."

"Are you sure?" said Mr. Wilson deeply, after an awestruck pause. "Half the time, you say. But how am I to find out when

she means—I give you my word, Belmore, that I thought—I suppose I could have brought her a small present, anyway, in spite of what she said ; a souvenir spoon—but she hates souvenir spoons."

" You'll have to cipher it out for yourself, old man," said Mr. Belmore. " *I* don't set out to interpret any woman's moods. I only give you cold, bare facts. But if I were you," he added impartially, " I'd go down after a while and try and get her alone, you know, and say something. You can, if you try." A swish of skirts outside of the open door made Mr. Wilson jump forward as Mrs. Belmore came in sight with her friend. The latter had her arm around the older woman, and her form drooped toward her as they passed the two men. The eyes of the girl were red, and her lips had a patient quiver. Mr. Wilson gave an exclamation and sprang forward as she disappeared in the farther room.

It was some hours later that the husband and wife met unexpectedly upon the stairs with a glad surprise.

" You don't mean to say it's you—alone ! " he whispered.

" Wait—is she coming up ? " They clutched each other spasmodically as they listened to the sound of a deflecting footstep. There was a breathless moment, and then the chords of a funeral march boomed forth upon the air. The loud pedal was doing its best to supplement those long and strenuous fingers.

The listeners breathed a sigh of relief.

" He's gone to the station for a time-table," whispered the husband, with a delighted grin ; " though I can stand *him* all right. We had a nice walk with the little girls, after he got tired of playing hide-and-seek. I wished you were with us. You must be about used up. How are you getting along with her ? "

" Oh, pretty well." She let herself be drawn down on the hall window seat at the top of the landing. " You see, Edith really feels dreadfully, poor girl."

" What about ? "

" Herbert, she isn't really sure that she loves him."

" Isn't sure ! After they've been engaged for a year ! "

" That's just it. She says if they had been married out of hand, in the first flush of the novelty, she wouldn't have had time, perhaps, to have any doubts. But it's the seeing him all the time that's made her think."

" Made her think *what* ? "

" Whether she loves him or not ; whether they are really suited. I remember that I used to feel that way about you, dear. Oh, you know, Herbert, it's a very serious thing for a girl. She says she knows her whole life is at stake ; she thinks about it all the time."

" How about his ? "

" Well, that's what I said," admitted Mrs. Belmore. " She says that she feels that *he* is so rational and self-poised that she makes

little difference in his life either way—it has come to her all at once. She says his looking at everything in a matter-of-fact way just chills her ; she longs for a whole-souled enthusiasm that can sweep everything before it. She feels that if they are married she will have to keep up the ideal for both of them, and she doesn't know whether she can."

" No, she can't," said Mr. Belmore.

" She says she could if she loved him enough," pursued Mrs. Belmore. " It's the *if* that kills her. She says that when she wakes up in the morning she feels as if she'd die if she didn't see him before night, and when she *does* see him it's all a dreadful disappointment to her ; she can't talk to him at all, she feels perfectly hard and stony ; then, the moment he's gone, she's crazy to have him back again. She cries herself thin over it."

" She's pretty bony, anyway," said Mr. Belmore impartially.

" Even his appearance changes to her. She says sometimes he looks like a Greek god, so that she could go down on her knees to him, and at other times— Once she happened to catch a glimpse of him in a horrid red sweater, polishing his shoes, and she said she didn't get over it for weeks ; he looked positively *ordinary*—like some of the men you see in the trolley cars."

" Oh, good gracious ! " protested Mr. Belmore feebly. " Oh, good *gracious*, petty ! This is *too* much."

" Hush—don't laugh so loud—be quiet," said his wife anxiously.

" If Wilson *ever* looks like a Greek god to her, she's all right, she loves him—you can tell her so for me. *Wilson !* Here are we sitting up here like a pair of lovers, and they— Hello ! "

The hall door opened and shut, the piano lid closed simultaneously with a bang, and there was a swirl of skirts again toward the staircase that scattered the guilty pair on the landing. The hostess heaved a patient sigh.

" They *shall* speak," said Mrs. Belmore when another hour had gone with the situation still unchanged. Her gentle voice had a note of determination. " I can't understand why he doesn't *make* her. She is literally crying her eyes out, because the whole day has been lost. Why didn't you send him into the parlour for a book, as I told you to, when I came up to take care of Dorothy ? "

" He wouldn't go—he said he wasn't doing the kindergarten act any more. Hang it, I don't blame him. A man objects to being made a fool of before people, and he's tired of it. Here he goes off again to-morrow for two weeks, and she with no more heart than——"

" Where is he now ? " asked Mrs. Belmore.

" Upstairs in my room, smoking."

" *Smoking !* I thought he'd promised her solemnly not to smoke."

" Yes, he did ; but he says he doesn't care a—red apple ; he's

going to have some comfort out of the day. I've left him with a box of cigars ; good ones, too. He's having the time of his life."

" O—o—h ! " said Mrs. Belmore, with the rapt expression of one who sees beyond the veil. When she spoke it was with impressive slowness. " When you hear me come downstairs with Edith and go in the parlour, you wait a moment and then bring him down—*with his cigar*—into the library. Do you understand ? "

" No," said Mr. Belmore.

" Oh, Herbert ! If she sees him *smoking*— ! There's no time to lose, for I have to get tea to-night. When I call you, leave him and come at once, do you hear ? Don't stop a minute—just come, before they get a chance to follow."

" You bet I'll come," said Mr. Belmore, " like a bird to its—I will really, petty."

That he nearly knocked her down by his wildly tragic rush when she called from the back hall, " Herbert, please come at once ! I can't turn off the water," was a mere detail—they clung to each other in silent laughter, behind the enshrouding portières, not daring to move. The footfall of the deserted Edith was heard advancing from the front room to the library, and her clear and solemn voice, as of one actuated only by the lofty dictates of duty penetrated distinctly to the listeners.

" Alan Wilson, is it possible that you are *smoking* ? Have you broken your promised word ? "

" Well, they're at it at last," said Mr. Belmore, relapsing into a chair in the kitchen with a sigh of relief, and drawing a folded newspaper from his pocket. " I wouldn't be in his shoes for a farm."

" Oh, it will be all right now," said Mrs. Belmore serenely. She added with some irrelevancy, " I've left the children to undress each other ; they've been *so* good. It's been such a different day, though, from what we had planned."

" It's too bad that you have to get the tea."

" Oh, I don't mind that a bit."

She had tucked up the silken skirt of her gown and was deftly measuring out coffee—after the swift, preliminary shaking of the fire with which every woman takes possession of a kitchen—pouring the water into the coffee-pot from the steaming kettle, and then vibrating between the kitchen closet and the butler's pantry with the quick, capable movements of one who knows her ground thoroughly. " Really, it isn't any trouble. Margaret leaves half of the things ready, you know. If you'll just lift down that dish of salad for me—and the cold chicken is beside it. I hate to ask you to get up, but— Thank you. How good the coffee smells ! I know you always like the coffee I make."

" You bet I do," said Mr. Belmore with fervour. " Say, petty, you don't think you could come out now and take a look at the garden ? I'm almost sure the peas are beginning to show."

"No; I'm afraid there isn't time. We'll have to give it up for this Sunday." She paused for a great effort. "If you'd like to go by yourself, dear——"

"Wouldn't you mind?"

She paused again, looking at him with her clear-eyed seriousness. "I don't think I mind now, but I might—afterward."

If he had hesitated, it was for a hardly appreciable second. "And I don't want to go," he protested stoutly; "it wouldn't be the same thing at all without you."

. . . . . .

"Everything is ready now," said his wife. "Though I do hate to disturb Edith and Alan. I'll just run up and hear the children say their prayers before I put those things on the table. If you would just take a look at the furnace"—it was the sentence Mr. Belmore had been dreading—"and then you can come up and kiss the children good-night."

Mr. Belmore, on his way up from stoking, caught a glimpse projected from the parlour mirror through an aperture in the doorway which the portières had left uncovered. The reflection was of a girl, with tear-stained face and closed eyes, her head upon a young man's shoulder, while his lips were touchingly pressed to her hair. The picture might have been called "After the Storm," the wreckage was so plainly apparent. As Mr. Belmore turned after ascending the flight of stairs he came full in sight of another picture, spread out to view in the room at the end of the hall. He stood unseen in the shadow regarding it.

His wife sat in a low chair near one of the two white beds; little Dorothy's crib was in their room beyond. The three children were perched on the foot of the nearest bed, white-gowned, with rosy faces and neatly brushed hair. While he looked, the youngest child gave a birdlike flutter and jump, and lighted on the floor, falling on her knees, with her bowed head in the mother's lap, her hands upraised. As she finished the murmured prayer, helped by the tender mother voice, she rose and stood to one side, in infantine seriousness, while the next one spread her white plumes for the same flight, waiting afterward in reverent line with the first as the third hovered down.

It was plain to see from the mother's face that she had striven to put all earthly thoughts aside in the performance of this sacred office of ministering to innocence; her eyes must be holy when her children's looked up at her on their way to God.

This was the little inner chapel, the Sanctuary of Home, where she was priestess by Divine right. It would have been an indifferent man, indeed, who had not fallen upon his knees in spirit, in company with this little household of faith, in mute recognition of the love and peace and order that crowned his days.

He kissed the laughing children as they clung to him, before she

turned down the light. When she came out of the room he was waiting for her. He put his arm around her as he said, with the darling tenderness that made her life :

" Come along, old sweetness. We've got to go down and stir up those lunatics again. Call *that* ' the happiest time of your life ' ! *We* know better than that, don't we, petty ? I'll tell you what it is : I'll go to church with you next Sunday, if you say so ! "

ROBERT GRANT

B. 1852

AGAINST HIS JUDGMENT

THREE days had passed, and the excitement in the neighbourhood was nearly at an end. The apothecary's shop at the corner into which John Baker's body and the living four-year-old child had been carried together immediately after the catastrophe had lost most of its interest for the curious, although the noses of a few idlers were still pressed against the large pane in apparent search of something beyond the brilliant coloured bottles or the soda-water fountains. Now that the funeral was over, the womenkind whose windows commanded a view of the house where the dead man had been lying had taken their heads in and resumed their sweeping and washing, and knots of their husbands and fathers no longer stood in gaping conclave close to the very door-sill, rehearsing again and again the details of the distressing incident. Even the little child that had been so miraculously saved from the jaws of death, although still decked in the dirty finery which its mother deemed appropriate to its having suddenly become a public character, was beginning to fall into obscurity and to cease to be the recipient of the dimes of the tender-hearted. Curiously enough, such is the capriciousness of the human temperament at times of emotional excitement, the plan of a subscription for the victim's family had not been mooted until what was to its parents a small fortune had been bestowed on the rescued child; but the scale of justice had gradually righted itself, and contributions were now pouring in, especially since it was known that the mayor and several other well-known persons had headed the list with subscriptions of fifty dollars each; and there was reason to believe that a lump sum of from fifteen hundred to two thousand dollars would be collected for the benefit of the widow and seven children before the public generosity was exhausted.

Local interest was on the wane; but, thanks to the telegraph and the press, the facts were being disseminated through the country, and every leading newspaper in the land was chronicling, with more or less periphrasis according to the character of its patrons, the item that John Baker, the gatekeeper at a railroad crossing in a Pennsylvania city, had snatched a toddling child from the pathway of a swiftly moving locomotive and been crushed to death.

A few days later a dinner company of eight was gathered at a country-house several hundred miles distant from the scene of the calamity. The host and hostess were people of wealth and leisure, who enjoyed inviting congenial parties from their social acquaintance in the neighbouring city to share with them for two or three days at a time the charms of nature. The dinner was appetizing and the wine good, and all present were engaged in that gracious unbending of self which ordinarily follows the action of refreshment and light on minds under the influence of pleasant impressions.

In a tavern the best result is joviality; at the dinner-table of intelligent gentlefolk—and of such we are speaking—the texture of the most agreeable conversation, though smooth as the choicest Laffitte and sparkling as champagne, has ever a thread of seriousness in the woof.

They had talked on a variety of topics: of the climate and landscape of Florida, where two of the party had sojourned during the winter months; of amateur photography, in which the hostess was proficient; of the very general use in common parlance of "don't" for "doesn't," and "but what" for "but that"; of Mrs. Langtry's beauty before she became an actress, concerning which one of the gentlemen who had met her in London was very eloquent; of some recent pictures and publications; of the impropriety and the increasing custom of feeing employees to do their duty; and of certain breaches of trust by bank officers and treasurers that, happening within a short time of one another, had startled the sensibilities of the community. This last subject begot a somewhat doleful train of commentary from two or three of the company, complaints of a too easy-going standard of morality, of a willingness not to be severe on anybody and to pass over lightly faults that our forefathers never would have condoned, of the decay of ideal considerations, and of the lack of enthusiasm for all but money-spinning among the rank and file of the people.

"The gist is here," reiterated in substance one of the speakers: "we insist upon tangible proof of everything, of being able to see and feel it—to get our dollar's worth, in short. We weigh and measure and scrutinize, and discard as fusty and outworn, conduct and guides to conduct that do not promise six per cent. per annum in full sight."

"What have you to say to John Baker?" said mine host, breaking the pause that followed these remarks. "I take it for granted that you are all familiar with his story: the newspapers have been full of it. *There* was a man who did not step to measure or scrutinize."

A murmur of approbation followed, which was interrupted by Mrs. Caspar Green, a stout and rather languid lady, inquiring to whom he referred. "You know I never read the newspapers," she added, with a decidedly superior air, putting up her eyeglass.

"Except the deaths and marriages," exclaimed her husband, a

lynx-eyed little stockbroker, who was perpetually poking what he called fun at his more ponderous half.

"Well, this was a death: so there was no excuse for her not seeing it," said Henry Lawford, the host. "No, seriously, Mrs. Green, it was a splendid instance of personal heroism: a gatekeeper at a railway crossing in Pennsylvania, perceiving a child of four on the track just in front of the fast express, rushed forward and managed to snatch up the little creature and deposit it on one side before—poor fellow!—he was struck and killed. There was no suggestion of counting upon six per cent. there, was there?"

"Unless in another sphere," interjected Caspar Green.

"Don't be sacrilegious, Caspar," pleaded his wife, though she added her mite to the ripple of laughter that greeted the sally.

"It was superb!—superb!" exclaimed Miss Ann Newbury, a young woman not far from thirty, with a long neck and a high-bred, pale, intellectual face. "He is one of the men who make us proud of being men and women." She spoke with sententious earnestness and looked across the table appealingly at George Gorham.

"He left seven children, I believe?" said he, with precision.

"Yes, seven, Mr. Gorham—the oldest eleven," answered Mrs. Lawford, who was herself the mother of five. "Poor little things!"

"I think he made a great mistake," remarked George laconically.

For an instant there was a hiatus. The company was evidently making sure that it had understood his speech correctly. Then Miss Newbury gave a gasp, and Henry Lawford, with a certain stern dignity that he knew how to assume, said:

"A mistake? How so, pray?"

"In doing what he did—sacrificing his life to save the child."

"Why, Mr. Gorham?" exclaimed the hostess, while everybody turned toward him. He was a young man between thirty and thirty-five, a lawyer beginning to be well thought of in his profession, with a thoughtful, pleasant expression and a vigorous physique.

"It seems to me," he continued slowly, seeking his words, "if John Baker had stopped to think, he would have acted differently. To be sure, he saved the life of an innocent child; but, on the other hand, he robbed of their sole means of support seven other no less innocent children and their mother. He was a brave man, I agree; but I, for one, should have admired him more if he had stopped to think."

"And let the child be killed?" exclaimed Mr. Carter, the gentleman who had deplored so earnestly the decay of ideal considerations. He was a young mill-treasurer, with aristocratic tendencies and a strong interest in church affairs.

"Yes, if needs be. It was in danger through no fault of his. Its natural guardians had neglected it."

"What a frightful view to take!" murmured Mrs. Green; and, although she was very well acquainted with George Gorham's

physiognomy, she examined him disapprovingly through her glass, as if there must be something compromising about it that had hitherto escaped detection.

"Well, I don't agree with you at all," said the host emphatically.

"Nor I," said Mr. Carter.

"Nor I, Mr. Gorham," said Mrs. Lawford, so plaintively as to convey the impression that if a woman as ready as she to accept new points of view abandoned him there could be no chance of his being right.

"No, you're all wrong, my dear fellow," said Casper Green. "Such ideas may go down among your long-haired artistic and literary friends at the Argonaut Club, but you can't expect civilized Christians to accept them. Why, man, it's monstrous—monstrous, by Jove!—to depreciate that noble fellow's action—a man that we all ought to be proud of, as Miss Newbury says. If we don't encourage such people, how can we expect them to be willing to risk their lives?" Thereupon the little broker, as a relief to his outraged feelings, emptied his champagne glass at a draught and scowled irascibly. His jesting equanimity was rarely disturbed; consequently, everybody felt the importance of his testimony.

"I'm sorry to be so completely in the minority," said Gorham, "but that's the way the matter strikes me. I don't think you quite catch my point though, Caspar," he added, glancing at Mr. Green. At a less heated moment the company, with the possible exception of Mrs. Green, might have tacitly agreed that this was extremely probable; but now Miss Newbury, who had hitherto refrained from comment in order to digest the problem thoroughly before speaking, came to the broker's aid.

"It seems to me, Mr. Gorham," she said, "that your proposition is a very plain one: you claim simply that John Baker had better not have saved the child if in order to do so it was necessary to lose his own life."

"Precisely," exclaimed Mr. Green, in a tone of some contempt.

"Was not Mr. Gorham's meaning that, though it required very great courage to do what Baker did, a man who stopped to think of his own wife and children would have shown even greater courage in restraining his impulse to save the child?" asked Miss Emily Vincent. She was the youngest of the party, a beautiful girl, of fine presence, with a round face, dark eyes, and brilliant pink-and-white colouring. She had been invited to stay by the Lawfords because George Gorham was attentive to her; or, more properly speaking, George Gorham had been asked because he was attentive to her.

"Thank you, Miss Vincent: you have expressed my meaning perfectly," said Gorham; and his face gladdened. He was dead in love with her, and this was the first civil word, so to speak, that she had said to him during the visit.

"Do you agree with him?" inquired Miss Newbury, with intellectual sternness.

"And do you agree with Mr. Gorham?" asked Mrs. Lawford, at the same moment, caressingly.

All eyes were turned on Emily Vincent, and she let hers fall confusedly. She felt that she would have given worlds not to have spoken. Why had she spoken?

"I understand what he means; but I don't believe a man in John Baker's place could help himself," she said quietly.

"Of course he couldn't!" cried Mrs. Lawford. "There, Mr. Gorham, you have lost your champion. What have you to say now?" A murmur of approval went round the table.

"I appreciate my loss, but I fear I have nothing to add to what has been said already," he replied, with smiling firmness. "Although in a pitiful minority, I shall have to stand or fall by that."

"Ah, but when it came to action we know that under all circumstances Mr. Gorham would be his father's son," said Mrs. Lawford, with less than her usual tact, though she intended to be very ingratiating. Gorham's father had been killed in the Civil War, after having become conspicuous for gallantry.

Gorham bowed a little stiffly, feeling that there was nothing for him to say. There was a pause, evincing that the topic was getting threadbare, which prompted the host to anticipate Mr. Carter, who, having caught Miss Newbury's eye, was about to philosophize further on the same lines, by calling his wife's attention to the fact that one of the candles was flaring. This turned the current of conversation, and the subject was not alluded to again.

During the twelve months following his visit at the Lawfords' the attentions of George Gorham to Emily began to be noticeable. He had loved her for three years in secret; but the consciousness that he was not able to support a wife had hindered him from devoting himself pronouncedly to her. He knew that she, or rather her father, had considerable property; but Gorham was not willing to take this into consideration; he would never offer himself until his own income was sufficient for both their needs. But, on the other hand, his ideas of a sufficient income were not extravagant. He looked forward to building a comfortable little house in the suburbs in the midst of a few acres of garden and lawn, so that his neighbours' windows need not overlook his domesticity. He would have a horse and buggy wherewith to drive his wife through the country on summer afternoons, and later, if his bank-account warranted it, a saddle-horse for Emily and one for himself. He would keep open house in the sense of encouraging his friends to visit him; and, that they might like to come, he would have a thoroughly good plain cook—thereby eschewing French kickshaws—and his parlour and his own snuggery should afford the best new books, and on the walls etchings and sketches winsome to the eye,

done by men who were rising rather than men who had risen. There should be no formality; his guests should do what they pleased and wear what they pleased, and, above all, they should become intimate with his wife, instead of merely tolerating her after the manner of the bachelor friends of so many other men.

Thus he had been in the habit of depicting to himself the future as he would have it be, and at last, by dint of strict undeviating attention to his business, he had got to the point where he could afford to realize his project if his lady-love were willing. His practice was increasing steadily, and he had laid by a few thousand dollars to meet any unexpected emergency. His life was insured for fifty thousand dollars, and the policy was now ten years old. He had every reason to expect that in course of time as the older lawyers died off he would either succeed to the lucrative conduct of large suits or be made a judge of one of the higher tribunals. In this manner his ambition would be amply satisfied. His aim was to progress slowly but solidly, without splurge or notoriety, until every one came to regard him tacitly as a man of sound dispassionate judgment, keen understanding, and simple, earnest life. His especial antipathy was for so-called cranks, people who went off at half-cock, who thought nothing out, but were governed by the impulse of the moment, shilly-shally and controlled by unmasculine sentimentality.

It was with hope and yet with his heart in his mouth that he set out one afternoon determined to ask Emily Vincent to become his wife. She lived in the suburbs, within fifteen miles by the train, or an hour's walk from town. Gorham took the cars. It was a beautiful day, almost the counterpart of that which they had passed together at the Lawfords' just a year before. As he sat in the train he analysed the situation once more for the hundredth time, taking care not to give himself the advantage of any ambiguous symptoms. Certainly she was not indifferent to him; she accepted his attentions without demur, and seemed interested in his interests. But was that love? Was it any more than esteem or cordial liking that he would turn to pity at the first hint of affection on his part? But surely she could not plead ignorance of his intentions; she must long ere this have realized that he was seriously attentive to her. Still, girls were strange creatures. He could not help feeling nervous, because so very much was involved for him in the result. Should she refuse him, he would be and remain for a long time excessively unhappy. He obliged himself to regard that alternative, and his heart sank before the possibility of its coming to pass. Not that the idea of dying or doing anything desperate presented itself to him. Such extravagance would have seemed out of keeping with respect either for her or for himself. Doubtless he might recover some day, but the interim would be terribly hard to endure. Rejection meant a dark, dreary bachelorhood; success, the crowning of his dearest hopes.

He found his sweetheart at home, and she came down to greet him with roses that he had sent her in her bosom. It was not easy for him to do or say anything extravagant, and Emily Vincent, while she might have pardoned unseemly effusiveness to his exceeding love for her, was well content with the deeply earnest though unriotous expression of his passion. When finally he had folded her in his arms she felt that the greatest happiness existence can give was hers, and he knew himself to be an utterly blissful lover. He had won the prize for which he had striven with a pertinacity like Jacob's, and life looked very roseate.

The news was broken to her family that evening, and received delightedly, though without the surprise the lovers had expected. They were left alone for a little while before the hour of parting and in the sweet kisses given and taken Gorham redeemed himself in his mistress's estimation for any lack of folly he had been guilty of when he had asked her to be his wife. There was riot now in his eyes and in his embraces, revealing that he had needed only to be sure of her encouragement to become as ridiculous as she could desire. He stood disclosed to himself in a new light ; and when he had kissed her once more for the last time he went tripping down the lawn radiantly happy, turning now and again to throw back with his fingers a message from his lips to the one being in all the world for him who stood on the threshold, adding poetry and symmetry to the beautiful June evening.

When out of sight of the house, Gorham sped fleetly along the road. He intended to walk to town, for he felt like glorying in his happiness under the full moon which was shedding her silver light from a clear heaven. The air was not oppressive, and it was scented with the perfume of the lilacs and apple-blossoms, so that Gorham was fain every now and then to draw a deep breath in order to inhale their fragrance. There was no dust, and nature looked spruce and trig, without a taint of the frowiness that is observable in the foliage a month later.

Gorham took very little notice of the details ; his eyes were busy rather with mind-problems than with the particular beauties of the night ; yet his rapt gaze swept the brilliant heaven as though he felt its lustre to be in harmony with the radiance in his own soul. He was imagining the future—his hearth forever blessed by her sweet presence, their mutual joys and sorrows sweetened and alleviated through being shared, his efforts to live a life in accord with the highest intimations of his being, fortified by her example and counsel. How the pleasures of walking and riding and reading and travelling—of everything in fact—would be a hundredfold enhanced by being able to interchange impressions with each other ! He pictured to himself the cosy evenings they would pass at home beside the lamp when the day's work was done, and the jolly trips they would take together when vacation time arrived. How he would watch over

her, and how he would guard her and tend her and comfort her if misfortune came or ill-health assailed her! There would be little ones, perhaps, to claim their joint devotion and bid him redouble his energies; he smiled at the thought of baby fingers about his neck, and there arose to his mind's eyes a sweet vision of Emily sitting, pale but triumphant, rocking her new-born child upon her breast.

He walked swiftly on the wings of transport. It was almost as light as day, yet he met but few travellers along the country road. An occasional vehicle passed him, breaking the silvery stillness with its rumble that subsided at last into the distance. A pair of whispering lovers, arm in arm, who slunk into the shadow as he came abreast of them, won from him a glance of sympathy, and just after he had left them behind the shrill whistle of a locomotive jarring upon the silence seemed to bring him a message from the woman he adored. Had he not preferred to walk, that was the train he would have taken, and it must have stopped not many hundred yards from her door. He breathed a prayer of blessing on her rest, as he listened to it thundering past almost parallel to him in the cut below.

A little beyond this point the road curved and ran with gradual incline so as to cross the railroad track at grade about half a mile further on. This stretch of road was lined on each side by horse-chestnut trees set near to one another, the spreading foliage of which darkened the gravelled footpath, so that Gorham, who was enjoying the moonlight, preferred to keep in the middle of the road, which, by way of contrast, gleamed almost like a river. He was pursuing his way with elastic steps, when of a sudden his attention was arrested about a hundred and fifty yards from the crossing by something lying at the foot of one of the trees on the right-hand side. At a second glance he saw that it was a woman's figure. Probably she was asleep: but she might be ill or injured. It was a lonely spot: so it occurred to him that it was proper for him to ascertain which. Accordingly he stepped to her side and bent over her. From her calico dress, which was her only covering, she evidently belonged to the labouring class. She was a large, coarse-looking woman, and was lying, in what appeared to Gorham to be drunken slumber, on her bonnet, the draggled strings of which protruded. He hesitated a moment, and then shook her by the arm. She groaned boozily, but after he had shaken her again two or three times she rolled over and raised herself on her elbow, rubbing her eyes and staring at him glassily. "Are you hurt, woman?" he asked.

She made a guttural response which might have meant anything but she proved that she was uninjured by getting on her feet. She stared at her disturber bewilderedly, then, perceiving her bonnet, stooped to pick it up, and stood for a moment trying sleepily to poke it into shape and readjust its tawdry plumage. But all of a sudden she gave a start and began looking around her with recovered energy.

She missed something, evidently. Gorham followed the direction of her gaze as it shifted, and as his glance met the line of the road he perceived a little figure standing in the middle of the railway crossing. It was a child—her child, without doubt—and as he said so to himself the roar of an approaching train, coupled with the sound of the whistle, made him start with horror. The late express from town was due. Gorham remembered that there was a considerable curve in the railroad at this point. The woman had not perceived the situation—she was too far in the shade—but Gorham from where he stood commanded a clear view of the track.

Without an instant's hesitation he sprang forward and ran at full speed. His first thought was that the train was very near. He ran with all his might and main, his eyes fixed on the little white figure and shouting to warn it of its danger. Suddenly there flashed before his mind with vividness the remembrance of John Baker, and he recalled his argument at the Lawfords'. But he did not abate his speed. The child had plumped itself down on one of the sleepers, and was apparently playing with some pebbles. It was on the further track, and, startled by his cries and by the clang of the approaching train, looked up at him. He saw a pale, besmeared little countenance ; he heard behind him the agonizing screams of the mother, who had realized her baby's peril ; in his ears rang the shrill warning of the engineer as the engine rounded the curve. Would he be in time ?

As he reached the edge of the tracks, thought of Emily and a terrible consciousness of the sorrow she would feel if anything were to happen to him compressed his heart. But he did not falter. He was aware of the jangle of a fiercely rung bell, the hiss of steam, and a blinding glare ; he could feel on his cheek the breath of the iron monster. With set teeth he threw himself forward, stooped, and reached out over the rail ; in another instant he had tossed the child from the pathway of danger, and he himself had been mangled to death by the powerful engine.

THOMAS NELSON PAGE

1853–1922

OLE 'STRACTED

"AWE, little Ephum! *awe,* little E-phum! ef you don' come 'long heah, boy, an' rock dis chile, I'll buss you haid open!" screamed the high-pitched voice of a woman, breaking the stillness of the summer evening. She had just come to the door of the little cabin, where she was now standing, anxiously scanning the space before her, while a baby's plaintive wail rose and fell within with wearying monotony. The log cabin, set in a gall in the middle of an old field all grown up in sassafras, was not a very inviting-looking place; a few hens loitering about the new hen-house, a brood of half-grown chickens picking in the grass and watching the door, and a runty pig tied to a "stob," were the only signs of thrift; yet the face of the woman cleared up as she gazed about her and afar off, where the gleam of green made a pleasant spot, where the corn grew in the river bottom; for it was her home, and the best of all was she thought it belonged to them.

A rumble of distant thunder caught her ear, and she stepped down and took a well-worn garment from the clothes-line, stretched between two dogwood forks, and having, after a keen glance down the path through the bushes, satisfied herself that no one was in sight, she returned to the house, and the baby's voice rose louder than before. The mother, as she set out her ironing table, raised a dirge-like hymn, which she chanted, partly from habit and partly in self-defence. She ironed carefully the ragged shirt she had just taken from the line, and then, after some search, finding a needle and cotton, she drew a chair to the door and proceeded to mend the garment.

"Dis de on'ies' shut Ole 'Stracted got," she said, as if in apology to herself for being so careful.

The cloud slowly gathered over the pines in the direction of the path; the fowls carefully tripped up the path, and after a prudent pause at the hole, disappeared one by one within; the chickens picked in a gradually contracting circuit, and finally one or two stole furtively to the cabin door, and after a brief reconnaissance came in, and fluttered up the ladder to the loft, where they had been born, and yet roosted. Once more the baby's voice prevailed, and once more the woman went to the door, and, looking down the path, screamed, "Awe, little Ephum! awe, little Ephum!"

"Ma'm," came the not very distant answer from the bushes.

"Why 'n't you come 'long heah, boy, an' rock dis chile?"

"Yes'm, I comin'," came the answer. She waited, watching, until there emerged from the bushes a queer little caravan, headed by a small brat, who staggered under the weight of another apparently nearly as large and quite as black as himself, while several more of various degrees of diminutiveness struggled along behind.

"Ain't you heah me callin' you, boy? You better come when I call you. I'll tyah you all to pieces!" pursued the woman, in the angriest of keys, her countenance, however, appearing unruffled. The head of the caravan stooped and deposited his burden carefully on the ground; then, with a comical look of mingled alarm and penitence, he slowly approached the door, keeping his eye watchfully on his mother, and, picking his opportunity, slipped in past her, dodging skilfully just enough to escape a blow which she aimed at him, and which would have "slapped him flat" had it struck him, but which, in truth, was intended merely to warn and keep him in wholesome fear, and was purposely aimed high enough to miss him, allowing for the certain dodge.

The culprit, having stifled the whimper with which he was prepared, flung himself on to the foot of the rough plank cradle, and began to rock it violently and noisily, using one leg as a lever, and singing an accompaniment, of which the only words that rose above the noise of the rockers were "By-a-by, don't you cry; go to sleep little baby"; and sure enough the baby stopped crying and went to sleep.

Eph watched his mammy furtively as she scraped away the ashes and laid the thick pone of dough on the hearth, and shovelled the hot ashes upon it. Supper would be ready directly, and it was time to propitiate her. He bethought himself of a message.

"Mammy, Ole 'Stracted say you must bring he shut; he say he marster comin' to-night."

"How he say he is?" inquired the woman, with some interest.

"He ain' say—jes say he want he shut. He sutny is comical—he layin' down in de baid." Then, having relieved his mind, Eph went to sleep in the cradle.

"'Layin' down in de baid?'" quoted the woman to herself as she moved about the room. "I 'ain' nuver hern 'bout dat befo'. Dat sutny is a comical ole man anyways. He say he used to live on dis plantation, an' yit he al'ays talkin' 'bout de gret house an' de fine kerridges dee used to have, an 'bout he marster comin' to buy him back. De 'ain' nuver been no gret house on dis place, not sense I know nuttin 'bout it, 'sep de overseer house whar dat man live. I heah Ephum say Aunt Dinah tell him de ole house whar used to be on de hill whar dat gret oak-tree is in de pines bu'nt down de year he wuz born, an' he ole marster had to live in de overseer house, an' hit break he heart, an' dee teck all he niggers, an' dat's de way *he* come to blongst to we all; but dat ole man ain' know nuttin 'bout dat house, 'cause hit bu'nt down. I wonder whar he did come from?" she pursued, "an' what he sho' 'nough name? He sholy couldn' been named 'Ole 'Stracted,' jes so; dat ain' no name 'tall. Yit ef

he ain' 'stracted, 'tain' nobody is. He ain' even know he own name," she continued presently. " Say he marster'll know him when he come—ain' know de folks is free ; say he marster gwi buy him back in de summer an' kyar him home, an' 'bout de money he gwine gi' him. Ef he got any money, I wonder he live down dyah in dat evil-sperit hole." And the woman glanced around with great complacency on the picture-pasted walls of her own by no means sumptuously furnished house. " Money ! " she repeated aloud, as she began to rake in the ashes, " He ain't got nuttin. I got to kyar him piece o' dis bread now," and she went off into a dream of what they would do when the big crop on their land should be all in, and the last payment made on the house ; of what she would wear, and how she would dress the child, and the appearance she would make at meeting, not reflecting that the sum they had paid for the property had never, even with all their stinting, amounted in any one year to more than a few dollars over the rent charged for the place, and that the eight hundred dollars yet due on it was more than they could make at the present rate in a lifetime.

" Ef Ephum jes had a mule, or even somebody to help him," she thought, " but he ain' got nuttin. De chil'n ain big 'nough to do nuttin but eat ; he ain' not no brurrs, an' he deddy took 'way an' sold down Souf de same time my ole marster whar dead buy him ; dat's what I al'ays heah 'em say, an' I know he's dead long befo' dis, 'cause I heah 'em say dese Virginia niggers carn stan' hit long deah, hit so hot, hit frizzle 'em up, an' I reckon he die befo' he ole marster, whar I heah say die of a broked heart torectly after dee teck he niggers an' sell 'em befo' he face. I heah Aunt Dinah say dat, an' dat he might'ly sot on he ole servants, spressaly on Ephum deddy, whar named Little Ephum, an' whar used to wait on him. Dis mus' 'a' been a gret place dem days, 'cordin' to what dee say." She went on : " Dee say he sutny live strong, wuz jes rich as cream, an' weahed he blue coat an' brass buttons, an' lived in dat ole house whar was up whar de pines is now, an' whar bu'nt down, like he owned de wull. An' now look at it ; dat man own it all, an' cuttin' all de woods off it. He don't know nuttin 'bout black folks, ain' nuver been fotch up wid 'em. Who ever heah he name 'fo' he come heah an' buy de place, an' move in de overseer house, an charge we all eight hundred dollars for dis land, jes 'cause it got little piece o' bottom on it, an' forty-eight dollars rent besides, wid he ole stingy wife whar oon' even gi' 'way buttermilk ! " An expression of mingled disgust and contempt concluded the reflection.

She took the ash-cake out of the ashes, slapped it first on one side, then on the other, with her hand, dusted it with her apron, and walked to the door and poured a gourd of water from the piggin over it. Then she divided it in half ; one half she sat up against the side of the chinney, the other she broke up into smaller pieces and distributed among the children, dragging the sleeping Eph, limp and

soaked with sleep, from the cradle to receive his share. Her manner was not rough—was perhaps even tender—but she used no caresses, as a white woman would have done under the circumstances. It was only toward the baby at the breast that she exhibited any endearments. Her nearest approach to it with the others was when she told them, as she portioned out the ash-cake, "Mammy ain't got nuttin else; but nuver min', she gwine have plenty o' good meat next year, when deddy done pay dor he land."

"Hi! who dat out dyah?" she said suddenly. "Run to de do', son, an' see who dat comin'," and the whole tribe rushed to inspect the new-comer.

It was, as she suspected, her husband, and as soon as he entered she saw that something was wrong. He dropped into a chair, and sat in moody silence, the picture of fatigue, physical and mental. After waiting for some time, she asked indifferently, "What de matter?"

"Dat man."

"What he done do now?" The query was sharp with suspicion.

"He say he ain' gwine let me have my land."

"He's a half-strainer," said the woman, with sudden anger. "How he gwine help it? Ain' you got crap on it?" She felt that there must be a defence against such an outrage.

"He say he ain' gwine wait no longer; dat I wuz to have tell Christmas to finish payin' for it, an' I ain' do it, an' now he done change he min'."

"Tell dis Christmas comin'," said his wife, with the positiveness of one accustomed to expound contracts.

"Yes; but I tell you he say he done change he min'." The man had evidently given up all hope; he was dead beat.

"De crap's yourn," said she, affected by his surrender, but prepared only to compromise.

"He say he gwine teck all dat for de rent, and dat he gwine drive Ole 'Stracted 'way too."

"He ain' nuttin but po' white trash!" It expressed her supreme contempt.

"He say he'll gi' me jes one week mo' to pay him all he ax for it," continued he, forced to a correction by her intense feeling, and the instinct of a man to defend the absent from a woman's attack, and perhaps in the hope that she might suggest some escape.

"He ain' nuttin sep po' white trash!" she repeated. "How you gwine raise eight hundred dollars at once? Dee kyarn nobody do dat. Gord mout! He ain' got good sense."

"You ain' see dat corn lately, is you?" he asked. "Hit jes as rank! You can almos' see it growin' ef you look at it good. Dat's strong land. I know dat when I buy it."

He knew it was gone now, but he had been in the habit of calling it his in the past three years, and it did him good to claim the ownership a little longer.

" I wonder whar Marse Johnny is ? " said the woman. He was the son of her former owner ; and now, finding her proper support failing her, she instinctively turned to him. " He wouldn' let him turn we all out."

" He ain' got nuttin, an' ef he is, he kyarn get it in a week," said Ephraim.

" Kyarn you teck it in de co't ? "

" Dat's whar he say he gwine have it ef I don' git out," said her husband despairingly.

Her last defence was gone.

" Ain' you hongry ? " she inquired.

" What you got ? "

" I jes gwine kill a chicken for you."

It was her nearest approach to tenderness, and he knew it was a mark of special attention, for all the chickens and eggs had for the past three years gone to swell the fund which was to buy the home, and it was only on special occasions that one was spared for food.

The news that he was to be turned out of his home had fallen on him like a blow, and had stunned him ; he could make no resistance, he could form no plans. He went into a rough estimate as he waited.

" Le' me see : I done wuck for it three years dis Christmas done gone ; how much does dat meck ? "

" An' fo' dollars, an' five dollars, an' two dollars an' a half last Christmas from de chickens, an' all dem ducks I done sell he wife, an' de washin' I been doin' for 'em ; how much is dat ? " supplemented his wife.

" Dat's what I say ! "

His wife endeavoured vainly to remember the amount she had been told it was ; but the unaccounted-for washing changed the sum and destroyed her reliance on the result. And as the chicken was now approaching perfection, and required her undivided attention, she gave up the arithmetic and applied herself to her culinary duties.

Ephraim also abandoned the attempt, and waited in a reverie, in which he saw corn stand so high and rank over his land that he could scarcely distinguish the bulk, and a stable and barn and a mule, or maybe two—it was a possibility—and two cows which his wife would milk, and a green wagon driven by his boys, while he took it easy and gave orders like a master, and a clover patch, and wheat, and he saw the yellow grain waving, and heard his sons sing the old harvest song of " Cool Water " while they swung their cradles, and—

" You say he gwine turn Ole 'Stracted out, too ? " inquired his wife, breaking the spell. The chicken was done now, and her mind reverted to the all-engrossing subject.

" Yes ; say he tired o' ole 'stracted nigger livin' on he place an' payin' no rent."

" Good Gord A'mighty ! Pay rent for dat ole pile o' logs ! Ain' he been mendin' he shoes an' harness for rent all dese years ? "

" 'Twill kill dat ole man to tu'n him out dat house," said Ephraim ; " he ain' 'nuver stay away from dyah a hour since he come heah."

" Sutny 'twill," assented his wife ; then she added, in reply to the rest of the remark, " Nuver min' ; den we'll see what he got in dyah." To a woman, that was at least some compensation. Ephraim's thoughts had taken a new direction.

" He al'ays feared he marster'd come for him while he 'way," he said, in mere continuance of his last remark.

" He sen' me wud he marster comin' to-night, an' he want he shut," said his wife, as she handed him his supper. Ephraim's face expressed more than interest ; it was tenderness which softened the rugged lines as he sat looking into the fire. Perhaps he thought of the old man's loneliness, and of his own father torn away and sold so long ago, before he could even remember, and perhaps very dimly of the beauty of the sublime devotion of this poor old creature to his love and his trust, holding steadfast beyond memory, beyond reason, after the knowledge even of his own identity and of his very name was lost.

The woman caught the contagion of his sympathy.

" De chil'n say he mighty comical, an' he layin' down in de baid," she said.

Ephraim rose from his seat.

" Whar you gwine ? "

" I mus' go to see 'bout him," he said simply.

" Ain' you gwine finish eatin' ? "

" I gwine kyar dis to him."

" Well, I kin cook you anurr when we come back," said his wife, with ready acquiescence.

In a few minutes they were on the way, going single file down the path through the sassafras, along which little Eph and his followers had come an hour before, the man in the lead and his wife following, and, according to the custom of their race, carrying the bundles, one the surrendered supper and the other the neatly folded and well-patched shirt in which Ole 'Stracted hoped to meet his long-expected loved ones.

As they came in sight of the ruinous little hut which had been the old man's abode since his sudden appearance in the neighbourhood a few years after the war, they observed that the bench beside the door was deserted, and that the door stood ajar—two circumstances which neither of them remembered ever to have seen before ; for in all the years in which he had been their neighbour Ole 'Stracted had never admitted any one within his door, and had never been known to leave it open. In mild weather he occupied a bench outside, where he either cobbled shoes for his neighbours, accepting without question anything they paid him, or else sat perfectly quiet, with the air of a person waiting for some one. He held only the briefest communication with anybody, and was believed by some to have intimate relations with the Evil One, and his tumble-down hut,

which he was particular to keep closely daubed, was thought by such as took this view of the matter to be the temple where he practised his unholy rites. For this reason, and because the little cabin, surrounded by dense pines and covered with vines which the popular belief held " pizenous," was the most desolate abode a human being could have selected, most of the dwellers in that section gave the place a wide berth, especially toward nightfall, and Ole 'Stracted would probably have suffered but for the charity of Ephraim and his wife, who, although often wanting the necessaries of life themselves, had long divided it with their strange neighbour. Yet even they had never been admitted inside his door, and knew no more of him than the other people about the settlement knew.

His advent in the neighbourhood had been mysterious. The first that was known of him was one summer morning, when he was found sitting on the bench beside the door of this cabin, which had long been unoccupied and left to decay. He was unable to give any account of himself, except that he always declared that he had been sold by some one other than his master from that plantation, that his wife and boy had been sold to some other person at the same time for twelve hundred dollars (he was particular as to the amount), and that his master was coming in the summer to buy him back and take him home, and would bring him his wife and child when he came. Everything since that day was a blank to him, and as he could not tell the name of his master or wife, or even his own name, and as no one was left old enough to remember him, the neighbourhood having been entirely deserted after the war, he simply passed as a harmless old lunatic labouring under a delusion. He was devoted to children, and Ephraim's small brood were his chief delight. They were not at all afraid of him, and whenever they got a chance they would slip off and steal down to his house, where they might be found any time squatting about his feet, listening to his accounts of his expected visit from his master, and what he was going to do afterward. It was all of a great plantation, and fine carriages and horses, and a house with his wife and the boy.

This was all that was known of him, except that once a stranger, passing through the country, and hearing the name Ole 'Stracted, said that he heard a similar one once, long before the war, in one of the Louisiana parishes, where the man roamed at will, having been bought of the trader by the gentleman who owned him, for a small price, on account of his infirmity. " Is you gwine in dyah ? " asked the woman, as they approached the hut.

" Hi ! yes ; 'tain' nuttin' gwine hu't you ; an' you say Ephum say he be layin' in de baid ? " he replied, his mind having evidently been busy on the subject.

" An' mighty comical," she corrected him, with exactness born of apprehension.

" Well ? I 'feared he sick."

" I ain' nuver been in dyah," she persisted.

" Ain' de chil'n been in dyah ? "

" Dee say 'stracted folks oon hu't chil'n."

" Dat ole man oon hu't nobody ; he jes tame as a ole tomcat."

" I wonder he ain' feared to live in dat lonesome ole house by hisself. I jes lieve stay in a graveyard at once. I ain' wonder folks say he sees sperrits in dat hanty-lookin' place." She came up by her husband's side at the suggestion. " I wonder he don' go home."

" Whar he got any home to go to sep heaven ? " said Ephraim.

" What was you mammy name, Ephum ? "

" Mymy," said he, simply.

They were at the cabin now, and a brief pause of doubt ensued. It was perfectly dark inside the door, and there was not a sound. The bench where they had heretofore held their only communication with their strange neighbour was lying on its side in the weeds which grew up to the very walls of the ruinous cabin, and a lizard suddenly ran over it, and with a little rustle disappeared under the rotting ground-sill. To the woman it was an ill omen. She glanced furtively behind her, and moved nearer her husband's side. She noticed that the cloud above the pines was getting a faint yellow tinge on its lower border, while it was very black above them. It filled her with dread, and she was about to call her husband's notice to it, when a voice within arrested their attention. It was very low, and they both listened in awed silence, watching the door meanwhile as if they expected to see something supernatural spring from it.

" Nem min'—jes wait—'tain so long now—he'll be heah torectly," said the voice. " Dat's what he say—gwine come an' buy me back —den we gwine home."

In their endeavour to catch the words they moved nearer, and made a slight noise. Suddenly the low, earnest tone changed to one full of eagerness. " Who dat ? " was called in sharp inquiry.

" 'Tain' nobody but me an' Polly, Ole 'Stracted," said Ephraim, pushing the door slightly wider open and stepping in. They had an indistinct idea that the poor deluded creature had fancied them his longed-for loved ones, yet it was a relief to see him bodily.

" Who you say you is ? " inquired the old man feebly.

" Me an' Polly."

" I done bring you shut home," said the woman, as if supplementing her husband's reply. " Hit all bran' clean, an' I done patch it."

" Oh, I thought——" said the voice sadly.

They knew what he thought. Their eyes were now accustomed to the darkness, and they saw that the only article of furniture which the room contained was the wretched bed or bench on which the old man was stretched. The light sifting though the chinks in the roof enabled them to see his face, and that it had changed much in the last twenty-four hours, and an instinct told them that he was near the end of his long waiting.

" How is you, Ole 'Stracted ? " asked the woman.

" Dat ain' my name," answered the old man promptly. It was the first time he had ever disowned the name.

" Well, how is you, Ole—— What I gwine to call you ? " asked she, with feeble finesse.

" I don' know—he kin tell you."

" Who ? "

" Who ? Marster. He know it. Ole 'Stracted ain' know it ; but dat ain' nuttin. *He* know it—got it set down in de book. I jes waitin' for 'em now."

A hush fell on the little audience—they were in full sympathy with him, and, knowing no way of expressing it, kept silence. Only the breathing of the old man was audible in the room. He was evidently nearing the end. " I mighty tired of waitin'," he said pathetically. " Look out dyah and see ef you see anybody," he added suddenly.

Both of them obeyed, and then returned and stood silent ; they could not tell him no.

Presently the woman said, " Don' you warn put you' shut on ? "

" What did you say my name was ? " he said.

" Ole 'Str——" She paused at the look of pain on his face, shifted uneasily from one foot to the other, and relapsed into embarrassed silence.

" Nem min' ! dee'll know it—dee'll know me 'dout any name, oon dee ? " He appealed wistfully to them both. The woman for answer unfolded the shirt. He moved feebly, as if in assent.

" I so tired waitin'," he whispered ; " done 'mos gin out, an' he oon come ; but I thought I heah little Eph to-day ? " There was a faint inquiry in his voice.

" Yes, he wuz heah."

" Wuz he ? " The languid form became instantly alert, the tired face took on a look of eager expectancy. " Heah, gi' m'y shut quick. I knowed it. Wait ; go over dyah, son, and git me dat money. He'll be heah torectly." They thought his mind wandered, and merely followed the direction of his eyes with theirs. " Go over dyah quick—don't you heah me ? "

And to humour him Ephraim went over to the corner indicated.

" Retch up dyah, an' run you' hand in onder de second jice. It's all in dyah," he said to the woman—" twelve hunderd dollars—dat's what dee went for. I wucked night an' day forty year to save dat money for marster ; you known dee teck all he land an' all he niggers an' tu'n him out in de old fiel' ? I put 'tin dyah 'ginst he come. You ain' know he comin' dis evenin', is you ? Heah, help me on wid dat shut, gal—I stan'in' heah talkin' an' maybe ole marster waitin'. Push de do' open so you kin see. Forty year ago," he murmured, as Polly jammed the door back and returned to his side—" forty year ago dee come an' leveled on me ; marster sutny did cry. ' Nem

min',' he said, ' I comin' right down in de summer to buy you back an' bring you home.' He's comin', too—nuver tol' me a lie in he life—comin' dis evenin'. Make 'aste." This in tremulous eagerness to the woman, who had involuntarily caught the feeling, and was now with eager and ineffectual haste trying to button his shirt.

An exclamation from her husband caused her to turn around, as he stepped into the light and held up an old sock filled with something.

" Heah, hol you' apron," said the old man to Polly, who gathered up the lower corners of her apron and stood nearer the bed.

" Po' it in dyah." This to Ephraim, who mechanically obeyed. He pulled off the string, and poured into his wife's lap the heap of glittering coin—gold and silver more than their eyes had ever seen before.

" Hit's all dyah," said the old man confidentially, as if he were rendering an account. " I been savin' it ever sence dee took me 'way. I so busy savin' it i ain' had time to eat, but I ain' hongry now ; have plenty when I git home." He sank back exhausted. " Oon marster be glad to see me ? " he asked presently in pathetic simplicity. " You know we grewed up togerr ? I been waitin' so long I 'feared dee 'mos' done forgit me. You reckon dee is ? " he asked the woman appealingly.

" No, suh, dee ain' forgit you," she said comfortingly.

" I know dee ain'," he said, reassured. " Dat's what he tell me —he ain' nuver gwine forgit me." The reaction had set in, and his voice was so feeble now it was scarcely audible. He was talking rather to himself than to them, and finally he sank into a doze. A painful silence reigned in the little hut, in which the only sign was the breathing of the dying man. A single shaft of light stole down under the edge of the slowly passing cloud and slipped up to the door. Suddenly the sleeper waked with a start, and gazed around.

" Hit gittin' mighty dark," he whispered faintly. " You reckon dee'll git heah 'fo' dark ? "

The light was dying from his eyes.

" Ephum," said the woman, softly, to her husband.

The effect was electrical.

" Heish ! you heah dat ! " exclaimed the dying man eagerly.

" Ephum "—she repeated. The rest was drowned by Ole 'Stracted's joyous exclamation.

" Gord ! I knowed it ! " he cried, suddenly rising upright, and, with beaming face, stretching both arms toward the door. " Dyah dee come ! Now watch 'em smile. All y'all jes stand back. Heah de one you lookin' for. Marster—Mymy—heah's Little Ephum ! " And with a smile on his face he sank back into his son's arms.

The evening sun, dropping on the instant to his setting, flooded the room with light ; but as Ephraim gently eased him down and drew his arm from around him, it was the light of the unending morning that was on his face. His Master had at last come for him, and after his long waiting, Ole 'Stracted had indeed gone home.

HENRY CUYLER BUNNER

1855–1896

THE NICE PEOPLE

"THEY certainly are nice people," I assented to my wife's observation, using the colloquial phrase with a consciousness that it was anything but "nice" English, "and I'll bet that their three children are better brought up than most of——"

"*Two* children," corrected my wife.

"Three, he told me."

"My dear, she said there were *two*."

"He said three."

"You've simple forgotten. I'm *sure* she told me they had only two—a boy and a girl."

"Well, I didn't enter into particulars."

"No, dear, and you couldn't have understood him. Two children."

"All right," I said; but I did not think it was all right. As a near-sighted man learns by enforced observation to recognise persons at a distance when the face is not visible to the normal eye, so the man with a bad memory learns, almost unconsciously, to listen carefully and report accurately. My memory is bad; but I had not had time to forget that Mr. Brewster Brede had told me that afternoon that he had three children, at present left in the care of his mother-in-law, while he and Mrs. Brede took their summer vacation.

"Two children" repeated my wife; "and they are staying with his aunt Jenny."

"He told me with his mother-in-law," I put in. My wife looked at me with a serious expression. Men may not remember much of what they are told about children; but any man knows the difference between an aunt and a mother-in-law.

"But don't you think they're nice people?" asked my wife.

"Oh, certainly," I replied; "only they seem to be a little mixed up about their children."

"That isn't a nice thing to say," returned my wife.

I could not deny it.

. . . . . .

And yet the next morning, when the Bredes came down and seated themselves opposite us at table, beaming and smiling in their natural, pleasant, well-bred fashion, I knew, to a social certainty,

that they *were* " nice " people. He was a fine-looking fellow in his neat tennis-flannels, slim, graceful, twenty-eight or thirty years old, with a Frenchy-pointed beard. She was " nice " in all her pretty clothes, and she herself was pretty with that type of prettiness which outwears most other types—the prettiness that lies in a rounded figure, a dusky skin, plump, rosy cheeks, white teeth, and black eyes. She might have been twenty-five ; you guessed that she was prettier than she was at twenty, and that she would be prettier still at forty.

And nice people were all we wanted to make us happy in Mr. Jacobus's summer boarding-house on the top of Orange Mountain. For a week we had come down to breakfast each morning, wondering why we wasted the precious days of idleness with the company gathered around the Jacobus board. What joy of human companionship was to be had out of Mrs. Tabb and Miss Hoogencamp, the two middle-aged gossips from Scranton, Pa.—out of Mr. and Mrs. Biggle, an indurated head-bookkeeper and his prim and censorious wife—out of old Major Halkit, a retired business man, who, having once sold a few shares on commission, wrote for circulars of every stock company that was started, and tried to induce every one to invest who would listen to him ? We looked around at those dull faces, the truthful indices of mean and barren minds, and decided that we would leave that morning. Then we ate Mrs. Jacobus's biscuits, light as Aurora's cloudlets, drank her honest coffee, inhaled the perfume of the late azaleas with which she decked her table, and decided to postpone our departure one more day. And then we wandered out to take our morning glance at what we called " our view " ; and it seemed to us as if Tabb and Hoogencamp, and Halkit and the Biggles could not drive us away in a year.

I was not surprised when, after breakfast, my wife invited the Bredes to walk with us to " our view." The Hoogencamp-Biggle-Tabb-Halkit contingent never stirred off Jacobus's verandah ; but we both felt that the Bredes would not profane that sacred scene. We strolled slowly across the fields, passed through the little belt of wood, and as I heard Mrs. Brede's little cry of startled rapture, I motioned to Brede to look up.

" By Jove ! " he cried ; " heavenly ! "

We looked off from the brow of the mountain over fifteen miles of billowing green, to where, far across a far stretch of pale blue, lay a dim purple line that we knew was Staten Island. Towns and villages lay before us and under us ; there were ridges and hills, uplands and lowlands, woods and plains, all massed and mingled in that great silent sea of sunlit green. For silent it was to us, standing in the silence of a high place—silent with a Sunday stillness that made us listen, without taking thought, for the sound of bells coming up from the spires that rose above the tree-tops—the tree-tops that lay as far beneath us as the light clouds were above us

that dropped great shadows upon our heads and faint specks of shade upon the broad sweep of land at the mountain's foot.

"And so that is *your* view?" asked Mrs. Brede, after a moment; "you are very generous to make it ours too."

Then we lay down on the grass, and Brede began to talk in a gentle voice, as if he felt the influence of the place. He had paddled a canoe, in his earlier days, he said, and he knew every river and creek in that vast stretch of landscape. He found his landmarks, and pointed out to us where the Passaic and the Hackensack flowed, invisible to us, hidden behind great ridges that in our sight were but combings of the green waves upon which we looked down, and yet on the further side of those broad ridges and rises were scores of villages—a little world of country life, lying unseen under our eyes.

"A good deal like looking at humanity," he said; "there is such a thing as getting so far above our fellow-men that we see only one side of them."

Ah, how much better was this sort of talk than the chatter and gossip of the Tabb and the Hoogencamp—than the Major's dissertations upon his everlasting circulars! My wife and I exchanged glances.

"Now, when I went up the Matterhorn——" Mr. Brede began.

"Why, dear," interrupted his wife; "I didn't know you ever went up the Matterhorn."

"It—it was five years ago," said Mr. Brede hurriedly; "I—I didn't tell you—when I was on the other side, you know—it was rather dangerous—well, as I was saying—it looked—oh, it didn't look at all like this."

A cloud floated overhead, throwing its great shadow over the field where we lay. The shadow passed over the mountain's brow, and reappeared far below, a rapidly decreasing blot; flying eastward over the golden green. My wife and I exchanged glances once more. Somehow the shadow lingered over us all. As we went home, the Bredes went side by side along the narrow path, and my wife and I walked together.

"*Should you think,*" she asked me, "that a man would climb the Matterhorn the very first year he was married?"

"I don't know, my dear," I answered evasively; "this isn't the first year I have been married, not by a good many, and I wouldn't climb it—for a farm."

"You know what I mean?" she said. I did.

. . . . . .

When we reached the boarding-house, Mr. Jacobus took me aside.

"You know," he began his discourse, "my wife, she used to live in N' York!"

I didn't know; but I said, "Yes."

"She says the numbers on the streets runs criss-cross like. Thirty-

four's on one side o' the street, an' thirty-five's on t'other. How's that ? "

" That is the invariable rule, I believe."

" Then—I say—these here new folk that you 'n' your wife seems so mighty taken up with—d'ye know anything about 'em ? "

" I know nothing about the character of your boarders, Mr. Jacobus," I replied, conscious of some irritability. " If I choose to associate with any of them——"

" Jess so—jess so ! " broke in Jacobus. " I hain't nothin' to say ag'inst yer sosherbil'ty. But do ye *know* them ? "

" Why, certainly not," I replied.

" Well—that was all I wuz askin' ye. Ye see, when *he* come here to take the rooms—you wasn't here then—he told my wife that he lived at number thirty-four in his street. An' yistiddy *she* told her that they lived at number thirty-five. He said he lived in an apartment-house. Now, there can't be no apartment-house on two sides of the same street, kin they ? "

" What street was it ? " I inquired wearily.

" Hundred 'n' twenty-first street."

" Maybe," I replied, still more wearily. " That's Harlem. Nobody knows what people will do in Harlem."

I went up to my wife's room.

" Don't you think it queer ? " she asked me.

" I think I'll have a talk with that young man to-night," I said, " and see if he can give some account of himself."

" But, my dear," my wife said gravely, " *she* doesn't know whether they've had the measles or not."

" Why, Great Scott ! " I exclaimed, " they must have had them when they were children."

" Please don't be stupid," said my wife. " I meant *their* children."

. . . . . .

After dinner that night—or rather after supper, for we had dinner in the middle of the day at Jacobus's—I walked down the long verandah to ask Brede, who was placidly smoking at the other end, to accompany me on a twilight stroll. Half-way down I met Major Halkit.

" That friend of yours," he said, indicating the unconscious figure at the further end of the house, " seems to be a queer sort of a Dick. He told me that he was out of business, and just looking round for a chance to invest his capital. And I've been telling him what an everlasting big show he had to take stock in the Capitoline Trust Company—starts next month—four million capital ; I told you all about it. ' Oh, well,' he says, ' let's wait and think about it.' ' Wait ! ' says I ; ' the Capitoline Trust Company won't wait for *you*, my boy. This is letting you in on the ground floor,' says I ; ' and it's now or never.' ' Oh, let it wait,' says he. I don't know

what's in-*to* the man."

"I don't know how well he knows his own business, Major," I said as I started again for Brede's end of the verandah. But I was troubled none the less. The Major could not have influenced the sale of one share of stock in the Capitoline Company. But that stock was a great investment; a rare chance for a purchaser with a few thousand dollars. Perhaps it was no more remarkable that Brede should not invest than that I should not; and yet it seemed to add one circumstance more to the other suspicious circumstances.

. . . . . .

When I went upstairs that evening, I found my wife putting her hair to bed—I don't know how I can better describe an operation familiar to every married man. I waited until the last tress was coiled up, and then I spoke.

"I've talked with Brede," I said, "and I didn't have to catechise him. He seemed to feel that some sort of explanation was looked for, and he was very outspoken. You were right about the children—that is, I must have misunderstood him. There are only two; but the Matterhorn episode was simple enough. He didn't realise how dangerous it was until he had got so far into it that he couldn't back out; and he didn't tell her, because he'd left her here, you see; and under the circumstances——"

"Left her here!" cried my wife. "I've been sitting with her the whole afternoon, sewing, and she told me that he left her at Geneva, and came back and took her to Basle, and the baby was born there. Now I'm sure, dear, because I asked her."

"Perhaps I was mistaken when I thought he said she was on this side of the water," I suggested with bitter, biting irony.

"You poor dear, did I abuse you?" said my wife. "But do you know Mrs. Tabb said that *she* didn't know how many lumps of sugar he took in his coffee. Now that seems queer, doesn't it?"

It did. It was a small thing; but it looked queer, very queer.

. . . . . .

The next morning it was clear that war was declared against the Bredes. They came down to breakfast somewhat late, and as soon as they arrived the Biggles swooped up the last fragments that remained on their plates, and made a stately march out of the dining-room. Then Miss Hoogencamp arose and departed, leaving a whole fish-ball on her plate. Even as Atalanta might have dropped an apple behind her to tempt her pursuer to check his speed, so Miss Hoogencamp left that fish-ball behind her, and between her maiden self and Contamination.

We had finished our breakfast, my wife and I, before the Bredes appeared. We talked it over, and agreed that we were glad that we had not been obliged to take sides upon such insufficient testimony.

After breakfast it was the custom of the male half of the Jacobus

household to go around the corner of the building and smoke their pipes and cigars, where they would not annoy the ladies. We sat under a trellis covered with a grape vine that had borne no grapes in the memory of man. This vine, however, bore leaves, and these, on that pleasant summer morning, shielded from us two persons who were in earnest conversation in the straggling, half-dead flower-garden at the side of the house.

"I don't want," we heard Mr. Jacobus say, "to enter in no man's *pry*-vacy; but I do want to know who it may be, like, that I hev in my house. Now what I ask of *you*—and I don't want you to take it as in no ways *personal*—is, hev you your merridge-licence with you?"

"No," we heard the voice of Mr. Brede reply. "Have you yours?" I think it was a chance shot, but it told all the same. The Major (he was a widower), and Mr. Biggle and I looked at each other; and Mr. Jacobus, on the other side of the grape-trellis, looked at—I don't know what—and was as silent as we were.

Where is *your* marriage-licence, married reader? Do you know? Four men, not including Mr. Brede, stood or sate on one side or the other of that grape-trellis, and not one of them knew where his marriage-licence was. Each of us had had one—the Major had had three. But where were they? Where is *yours?* Tucked in your best-man's pocket; deposited in his desk, or washed to a pulp in his white waistcoat (if white waistcoats be the fashion of the hour), washed out of existence—can you tell where it is? Can you—unless you are one of those people who frame that interesting document and hang it upon their drawing-room walls?

Mr. Brede's voice arose, after an awful stillness of what seemed like five minutes, and was, probably, thirty seconds—

"Mr. Jacobus, will you make out your bill at once, and let me pay it? I shall leave by the six o'clock train. And will you also send the waggon for my trunks?"

"I hain't said I wanted to hev ye leave——" began Mr. Jacobus; but Brede cut him short.

"Bring me your bill."

"But," remonstrated Jacobus, "ef ye ain't——"

"Bring me your bill!" said Mr. Brede.

. . . . . .

My wife and I went out for our morning's walk. But it seemed to us, when we looked at "our view," as if we could only see those invisible villages of which Brede had told us—that other side of the ridges and rises of which we catch no glimpse from lofty hills or from the heights of human self-esteem. We meant to stay out until the Bredes had taken their departure; but we returned just in time to see Pete, the Jacobus darkey, the blacker of boots, the brusher of coats, the general handy-man of the house, loading the Brede's trunks on the Jacobus waggon,

And, as we stepped upon the verandah, down came Mrs. Brede, leaning on Mr. Brede's arm as though she were ill; and it was clear that she had been crying—there were heavy rings about her pretty black eyes. My wife took a step towards her.

"Look at that dress, dear," she whispered; "she never thought anything like this was going to happen when she put *that* on."

It was a pretty, delicate, dainty dress, a graceful, narrow-striped affair. Her hat was trimmed with a narrow-striped silk of the same colour—maroon and white; and in her hand she held a parasol that matched her dress. "She's had a new dress on twice a day," said my wife; "but that's the prettiest yet. Oh, somehow—I'm *awfully* sorry they're going!"

But going they were. They moved towards the steps. Mrs. Brede looked towards my wife, and my wife moved towards Mrs. Brede. But the ostracised woman, as though she felt the deep humiliation of her position, turned sharply away, and opened her parasol to shield her eyes from the sun. A shower of rice—a half-pound shower of rice—fell down over her pretty hat and her pretty dress, and fell in a splattering circle on the floor, outlining her skirts, and there it lay in a broad, uneven band, and bright in the morning sun.

Mrs. Brede was in my wife's arms, sobbing as if her young heart would break.

"Oh, you poor, dear, silly children!" my wife cried, as Mrs. Brede sobbed on her shoulder; "why *didn't* you tell us?"

"W-w-we didn't want to be t-t-taken for a b-b-b-b-bridal couple," sobbed Mrs. Brede; "and we d-d-didn't *dream* what awful lies we'd have to tell, and all the aw-aw-ful mixed-up mess of it. Oh, dear, dear, dear!"

"Pete!" commanded Mr. Jacobus, "put back them trunks. These folk stays here's long's they wants ter. Mr. Brede"—he held out a large, hard hand—"I'd orter 've known better," he said; and my last doubt of Mr. Brede vanished as he shook that grimy hand in manly fashion. The two women were walking off toward "our view," each with an arm about the other's waist—touched by a sudden sisterhood of sympathy.

"Gentlemen," said Mr. Brede, addressing Jacobus, Biggle, the Major, and me, "there is a hostelry down the street where they sell honest New Jersey beer. I recognise the obligations of the situation."

We five men filed down the street, and the two women went toward the pleasant slope where the sunlight gilded the forehead of the great hill. On Mr. Jacobus's verandah lay a spattered circle of shining grains of rice. Two of Mr. Jacobus's pigeons flew down and picked up the shining grains, making grateful noises far down in their throats.

A LETTER AND A PARAGRAPH

HENRY CUYLER BUNNER

I

THE LETTER

NEW YORK, *Nov.* 16, 1883.

MY DEAR WILL,—You cannot be expected to remember it, but this is the fifth anniversary of my wedding day, and to-morrow—it will be to-morrow before this letter is closed—is my birthday—my fortieth. My head is full of those thoughts which the habit of my life moves me to put on paper, where I can best express them; and yet which must be written for only the friendliest of eyes. It is not the least of my happiness in this life that I have one friend to whom I can unlock my heart as I can to you.

The wife has just been putting your namesake to sleep. Don't infer that, even on the occasion of this family feast, he has been allowed to sit up until half-past eleven. He went to bed properly enough, with a tear or two, at eight; but when his mother stole into his room just now, after her custom, I heard his small voice raised in drowsy inquiry; and I followed her, and slipped the curtain of the doorway aside, and looked. But I did not go into the room.

The shaded lamp was making a yellow glory in one spot—the head of the little brass crib where my wife knelt by my boy. I saw the little face, so like hers, turned up to her. There was a smile on it that I knew was a reflection of hers. He was winking in a merry half-attempt to keep awake; but wakefulness was slipping away from him under the charm of that smile that I could not see. His brown eyes closed, and opened for an instant, and closed again as the tender, happy hush of a child's sleep settled down upon him, and he was gone where we in our heavier slumbers shall hardly follow him. Then, before I could see my wife's face as she bent and kissed him, I let the curtain fall, and crept back here, to sit by the last of the fire, and see that sacred sight again with the spiritual eyes, and to dream wonderingly over the unspeakable happiness that has in some mysterious way come to me, undeserving.

I tell you, Will, that moment was to me like one of those moments of waking that we know in childhood, when we catch the going of a

dream too subtly sweet to belong to this earth—a glad vision, gone before our eyes can open wide ; not to be figured into any earthly idea, leaving in its passage a joy so high and fine that the poets tell us it is a memory of some heaven from which our young souls are yet fresh.

You can understand how it is that I find it hard to realise that there can be such things in my life ; for you know what that life was up to a few years ago. I am like a man who has spent his first thirty years in a cave. It takes more than a decade above ground to make him quite believe in the sun and the blue of the sky.

I was sitting just now before the hearth, with my feet in the bearskin rug you sent us two Christmases ago. The light of the low wood fire was chasing the shadows around the room, over my books and my pictures, and all the fine and gracious luxuries with which I may now make my eyes and my heart glad, and pamper the tastes that grow with feeding. I was taking count, so to speak, of my prosperity—the material treasures, the better treasure that I find in such portion of fame as the world has allotted me, and the treasure of treasures across the threshold of the next room—in the next room ? No—there, here, in every room, in every corner of the house, filling it with peace, is the gentle and holy spirit of love.

As I sat and thought, my mind went back to the day that you and I first met, twenty-two years ago—twenty-two in February next. In twenty-two years more I could not forget that hideous first day in the city room of the *Morning Record*. I can see the great gloomy room, with its meagre gas-jets lighting up, here and there, a pale face at a desk, and bringing out in ghastly spots the ugliness of the ink-smeared walls. A winter rain was pouring down outside. I could feel its chill and damp in the room, though little of it was to be seen through the grimy window panes. The composing-room in the rear sent a smell of ink and benzine to permeate the moist atmosphere. The rumble and shiver of the great presses printing the weekly came up from below. I sat there in my wet clothes and waited for my first assignment. I was eighteen, poor as a church mouse, green, desperately hopeful after a boy's fashion, and with nothing in my head but the Latin and Greek of my one single year at college. My spirit had sunk down far out of sight. My heart beat nervously at every sound of that awful city editor's voice, as he called up his soldiers one by one and assigned them to duty. I could only silently pray that he would " give me an easy one," and that I should not disgrace myself in the doing of it. By Jove, Will, what an old martinet Baldwin was, for all his good heart ! Do you remember that sharp, crackling voice of his, and the awful " Be brief ! be brief ! " that always drove all capacity for condensation out of a man's head, and set him to stammering out his story with wordy incoherence ? Baldwin is on the *Record* still. I wonder what

poor devil is trembling at this hour under that disconcerting adjuration.

A wretched day that was! The hours went slow as grief. Smeary little bare-armed fiends trotted in from the composing-room and out again, bearing fluttering galley-proofs. Bedraggled, hollow-eyed men came in from the streets and set their soaked umbrellas to steam against the heater, and passed into the lion's den to feed him with news, and were sent out again to take up their half-cooked umbrellas and go forth to forage for more. Every one, I thought, gave me one brief glance of contempt and curiosity, and put me out of his thoughts. Every one had some business—every one but me. The men who had been waiting with me were called up one by one and detailed to work. I was left alone.

Then a new horror came to torture my nervously active imagination. Had my superior officer forgotten his new recruit? Or could he find no task mean enough for my powers? This filled me at first with a sinking shame, and then with a hot rage and sense of wrong. Why should he thus slight me? Had I not a right to be tried at least? Was there any duty he could find that I would not perform or die? I would go to him and tell him that I had come there to work; and would make him give me the work. No, I should simply be snubbed, and sent to my seat like a schoolboy, or perhaps discharged on the spot. I must bear my humiliation in silence.

I looked up and saw you entering, with your bright, ruddy boy's face shining with wet, beaming a greeting to all the room. In my soul I cursed you, at a venture, for your light-heartedness and your look of cheery self-confidence. What a vast stretch of struggle and success set you above me—you, the reporter, above me, the novice! And just then came the awful summons—"Barclay! Barclay!"—I shall hear that strident note at the judgment day. I went in and got my orders, and came out with them, all in a sort of daze that must have made Baldwin think me an idiot. And then you came up to me and scraped acquaintance in a desultory way, to hide your kind intent; and gave me a hint or two as to how to obtain a full account of the biennial meeting of the Post-Pliocene Mineralogical Society, or whatever it was, without diving too deeply into the Post-Pliocene period. I would have fought for you to the death, at that moment.

'Twas a small matter, but the friendship begun in manly and helpful kindness has gone on for twenty-two years in mutual faith and loyalty; and the growth dignifies the seed.

A sturdy growth it was in its sapling days. It was in the late spring that we decided to take the room together in St. Mark's Place. A big room and a poor room, indeed, on the third story of that "battered caravanserai," and for twelve long years it held us and our hopes and our despairs and our troubles and our joys.

I don't think I have forgotten one detail of that room. There is the generous old fireplace, insultingly bricked up by modern poverty, all save the meagre niche that holds our fire—when we can have a fire. There is the great second-hand table—our first purchase—where we sit and work for immortality in the scant intervals of working for life. Your drawer, with the manuscript of your *Concordance of Political Economy*, is to the right. Mine is to the left; it holds the unfinished play, and the poems that might better have been unfinished. There are the two narrow cots—yours to the left of the door as you enter; mine to the right.

How strange that I can see it all so clearly, now that all is different!

Yet I can remember myself coming home at one o'clock at night, dragging my tired feet up those dark, still, tortuous stairs, gripping the shaky baluster for aid. I open the door—I can feel the little old-fashioned brass knob in my palm even now—and I look to the left. Ah, you are already at home and in bed. I need not look toward the table. There is money—a little—in the common treasury; and, in accordance with our regular compact, I know there stand on that table twin bottles of beer, half a loaf of rye bread, and a double palm's-breadth of Swiss cheese. You are staying your hunger in sleep; for one may not eat until the other comes. I will wake you up, and we shall feast together and talk over the day that is dead and the day that is begun.

Strange, is it not, that I should have some trouble to realise that this is only a memory—I, with my feet in the bearskin rug that it would have beggared the two of us, or a dozen like us, to purchase in those days. Strange that my mind should be wandering on the crude work of my boyhood and my early manhood. I who have won name and fame, as the world would say. I, to whom young men come for advice and encouragement, as to a tried veteran! Strange that I should be thinking of a time when even your true and tireless friendship could not quench a subtle hunger at my heart, a hunger for a more dear and intimate comradeship. I, with the tenderest of wives scarce out of my sight; even in her sleep she is no further from me than my own soul.

Strangest of all this, that the mad agony of grief, the passion of desolation that came upon me when our long partnership was dissolved for ever, should now be nothing but a memory, like other memories, to be summoned up out of the resting-places of the mind, toyed with, idly questioned, and dismissed with a sigh and a smile! What a real thing it was just ten years ago; what a very present pain! Believe me, Will—yes, I want you to believe this—that in those first hours of loneliness I could have welcomed death; death would have fallen upon me as calmly as sleep has fallen upon my boy in the room beyond there.

You knew nothing of this then; I suppose you but half believe it

now ; for our parting was manly enough. I kept as stiff an upper lip as you did, for all there was less hair on it. Perhaps it seems extravagant to you. But there was a deal of difference between our cases. You had turned your pen to money-making, at the call of love ; you were going to Stillwater to marry the judge's daughter, and to become a great landowner and mayor of Stillwater and millionaire—or what is it now ? And much of this you foresaw, or hoped for, at least. Hope is something. But for me ? I was left in the third story of a poor lodging-house in St. Mark's Place, my best friend gone from me ; with neither remembrance nor hope of Love to live on, and with my last story back from *all* the magazines.

We will not talk about it. Let me get back to my pleasant library with the books and the pictures and the glancing firelight, and me with my feet in your bearskin rug, listening to my wife's step in the next room.

To your ear, for our communion has been so long and so close that to either one of us the faintest inflection of the other's voice speaks clearer than formulated words ; to your ear there must be something akin to a tone of regret—regret for the old days—in what I have just said. And would it be strange if there were ? A poor soldier of fortune who had been set to a man's work before he had done with his meagre boyhood, who had passed from recruit to the place of a young veteran in that great, hard-fighting, unresting pioneer army of journalism ; was he the man, all of a sudden, to stretch his toughened sinews out and let them relax in the glow of the home hearth ? Would not his legs begin to twitch for the road ? would he not be wild to feel again the rain in his weather-beaten face ? Would you think it strange if at night he should toss in his white, soft bed, longing to change it for a blanket on the turf, with the broad procession of sunlit worlds sweeping over his head, beyond the blue spaces of the night ? And even if the dear face on the pillow next him were to wake and look at him with reproachful surprise ; and even if warm arms drew him back to his new allegiance ; would not his heart in dreams go throbbing to the rhythm of the drum or the music of songs sung by the camp-fire ?

It was so at the beginning, in the incredible happiness of the first year, and even after the boy's birth. Do you know it was months before I could accept that boy as a *fact?* If, at any moment, he had vanished from my sight, crib and all, I should not have been surprised. I was not sure of him until he began to show his mother's eyes.

Yes, even in those days some of the old leaven worked in me. I had moments of that old barbaric freedom which we used to rejoice in—that feeling of being answerable to nothing in the world save my own will—the sense of untrammelled, careless power.

Do you remember the night that we walked till sunrise ? You

remember how hot it was at midnight, when we left the office, and how the moonlight on the statue above the City Hall seemed to invite us fieldward, where no gaslight glared, no torches flickered. So we walked idly northward, through the black, silence-stricken down-town streets, through that feverish, unresting central region that lies between the vileness of Houston Street and the calm and spacious dignity of the brown-stone ways where the closed and darkened dwellings looked like huge tombs in the pallid light of the moon. We passed the suburban belt of shanties; we passed the garden-girt villas beyond them, and it was from the hill above Spuyten Duyvil that we saw the first colour of the morning upon the face of the Palisades.

It would have taken very little in that moment to set us off to tramping the broad earth, for the pure joy of free wayfaring. What was there to hold us back? No tie of home or kin. All we had in the world to leave behind us was some futile scribbling on various sheets of paper. And of that sort of thing both our heads were full enough. I think it was but the veriest chance that, having begun that walk, we did not go on and get our fill of wandering, and ruin our lives.

Well, that same wild, adventurous spirit came upon me now and then. There were times when, for the moment, I forgot that I had a wife and a child. There were times when I remembered them as a burden. Why should I not say this? It is the history of every married man—at least of every manly man—though he be married to the best woman in the world. It means no lack of love. It is as unavoidable as the leap of the blood in you that answers a trumpet-call.

At first I was frightened, and fought against it as against something that might grow upon me. I reproached myself for disloyalty in thought. Ah! what need had *I* to fight? What need had *I* to choke down rebellious fancies, while my wife's love was working that miracle that makes two spirits one?

What is it, this union that comes to us as a surprise, and remains for all outside an incommunicable mystery? What is this that makes our unmarried love seem so slight and childish a thing? You and I, who know it, know that it is no mere fruit of intimacy and usage, although in its growth it keeps pace with these. We know that in some subtle way it has been given to a man to see a woman's soul as he sees his own, and to a woman to look into a man's heart as if it were indeed hers. But the friend who sits at my table, seeing that my wife and I understand each other at a simple meeting of the eyes, makes no more of it than he does of the glance of intelligence which, with close friends, often takes the place of speech. He never dreams of the sweet delight with which we commune together in a language that he cannot understand—that he cannot hear—a language that has no formulated words, feeling answering feeling.

It is not wonderful that I should wish to give expression to the gratitude with which I have seen my life made to blossom thus; my thankfulness for the love which has made me not only a happier, but, I humbly believe, a wiser and a better-minded man. But I know too well the hopelessness of trying to find words to describe what, were I a poet, my best song might but faintly, faintly echo.

I thought I heard a rustle behind me just now. In a little while my wife will come softly into the room, and softly up to where I am sitting, stepping silently across your bearskin rug, and will lay one hand softly on my left shoulder, while the other slips down this arm with which I write, until it falls and closes lightly, yet with loving firmness, on my hand that holds the pen. And I shall say, "Only the last words to Will and his wife, dear." And she will release my hand, and will lift her own, I think, to caress the patch of grey hair on my temple; it is a way she has, as though it were some pitiful scar, and she will say, "Give them my love, and tell them they must not fail us this Christmas. I want them to see how our Willy has grown." And when she says "Our Willy," the hand on my shoulder will instinctively close a little, clingingly; and she will bend her head, and put her face close to mine, and I shall turn to look into her eyes.

. . . . . .

Bear with me, my dear Will, until I have told you why I have written this letter, and what it means. I have concealed one thing from you for the last six months. I have disease of the heart, and the doctor has told me that I may die at any moment. Somehow, I think—I know the moment is close at hand; I shall soon go to that narrow cot on the right of the door, and I do not believe I shall wake up in the morning with the sun in my eyes, to look across the room and see that its companion is gone.

For I am in the old room, Will, as you know, and it is not ten years since you went away, but two days. The picture that has seemed real to me as I wrote these pages is fading, and the thin gas-jet flickers and sinks as it always did in these first morning hours. I can hear the roar of the last Harlem train swell and sink, and the sharp clink of car-bells break the silence that follows. The wind is gasping and struggling in the chimney, and blowing a white powdery ash down on the hearth. I have just burnt my poems and the play. Both the table drawers are empty now; and soon enough the two empty chairs will stare at each other across the bare table. What a wild dream have I dreamt in all this emptiness! Just now, I thought indeed that it was true. I thought I heard a woman's step behind me, and I turned—

Peace be with you, Will, in the fulness of your love. I am going to sleep. Perhaps I shall dream it all again, and shall hear that soft footfall when the turn of the night comes, and the pale light through the ragged blind, and the end of a long loneliness.

After I am dead, I wish you to think of me not as I was, but as I wanted to be. I have tried to show you that I have led by your side a happier and dearer life of hope and aspiration than the one you saw. I have tried to leave your memory a picture of me that you will not shrink from calling up when you have a quiet hour and time for thought of the friend whom you knew well; but whom you may, perhaps, know better now that he is dead.

REGINALD BARCLAY.

II

THE PARAGRAPH

[From the *New York Herald* of Nov. 18, 1883.]

Reginald Barclay, a journalist, was found dead in his bed at 15 St. Mark's Place, yesterday morning. No inquest was held, as Mr. Barclay had been known to be suffering from disease of the heart, and his death was not unexpected. The deceased came originally from Oneida County, and was regarded as a young journalist of considerable promise. He had been for some years on the city staff of the *Record*, and was the correspondent of several out-of-town papers. He had also contributed to the monthly magazines occasional poems and short stories, which showed the possession, in some measure, of the imaginative faculty. Mr. Barclay was about thirty years of age, and unmarried.

FREDERIC JESUP STIMSON

B. 1855

MRS. KNOLLYS

I

Mrs. Knollys was a young English bride, sunny-haired, hopeful-eyed, with lips that parted to make you love them—parted before they smiled, and all the soft regions of her face broke into attendant dimples. And then, lest you should think it meant for you, she looked quickly up to "Charles," as she would then call him even to strangers, and Charles looked down to her. Charles was a short foot taller, with much the same hair and eyes, thick flossy whiskers, broad shoulders, and a bass voice. This was in the days before political economy cut Hymen's wings. Charles, like Mary, had little money, but great hopes; and he was clerk in a government office, with a friendly impression of everybody and much trust in himself. And old Harry Colquhoun, his chief, had given them six weeks to go to Switzerland and be happy in, all in celebration of Charles Knollys's majority and marriage to his young wife. So they had both forgotten heaven for the nonce, having a passable substitute; but the powers divine overlooked them pleasantly and forgave it. And even the phlegmatic driver of their *Einspänner* looked back from the corner of his eye at the *schöne Engländerin*, and compared her mentally with the far-famed beauty of the Königssee. So they rattled on in their curious conveyance, with the pole in the middle and the one horse out on one side, and still found more beauty in each other's eyes than in the world about them. Although Charles was only one-and-twenty, Mary Knollys was barely eighteen, and to her he seemed godlike in his age, as in all other things. Her life had been as simple as it had been short. She remembered being a little girl, and then the next thing that occurred was Charles Knollys, and positively the next thing she remembered of importance was being Mrs. Charles Knollys; so that old Mrs. Knollys, her guardian aunt and his, had first called her a love of a baby, and then but a baby in love. All this, of course, was five-and-forty years ago, for you know how old she was when she went again to Switzerland last summer—three-and-sixty.

They first saw the great mountains from the summit of the Schafberg. This is a little height, three-cornered, between three lakes; a

natural Belvedere for Central Europe. Mr. and Mrs. Knollys were seated on a couch of Alpine roses behind a rhododendron bush watching the sunset ; but as Charles was desirous of kissing Mrs. Knollys, and the rhododendron bush was not thick enough, they were waiting for the sun to go down. He was very slow in doing this, and by way of consolation Knollys was keeping his wife's hand hidden in the folds of her dress. Undoubtedly a modern lady would have been talking of the scenery, giving word-colour pictures of the view ; but I am afraid Mrs. Knollys had been looking at her husband, and talking with him of the cottage they had bought in a Surrey village, not far from Box Hill, and thinking how the little carvings and embroideries would look there which they had bought abroad. And, indeed, Mrs. Charles secretly thought Box Hill an eminence far preferable to the Venediger, and Charles's face an infinitely more interesting sight than any lake, however expressive. But the sun, looking askance at them through the lower mist, was not jealous ; all the same he spread his glory lavishly for them, and the bright little mirror of a lake twinkled cannily upward from below. Finally it grew dark ; then there was less talking. It was full night when they went in, she leaning on his arm and looking up ; and the moonbeam on the snowy shoulder of the Glockner, twenty leagues away, came over, straightway, from the mountain to her face. Three days later, Charles Knollys, crossing with her the lower portion of the Pasterzen glacier, slipped into a crevasse, and vanished utterly from the earth.

II

All this you know. And I was also told more of the young girl, bride and widow at eighteen ; how she sought to throw herself into the clear blue gulf ; how she refused to leave Heiligenblut ; how she would sit, tearless, by the rim of the crevasse, day after day, and gaze into its profundity. A guide or man was always with her at these times, for it was still feared she would follow her young husband to the depths of that still sea. Her aunt went over from England to her ; the summer waxed ; autumn storms set in ; but no power could win her from the place whence Charles had gone.

If there was a time worse for her than that first moment, it was when they told her that his body never could be found. They did not dare to tell her this for many days, but busied themselves with idle cranes and ladders, and made futile pretences with ropes. Some of the big, simple-hearted guides even descended into the chasm, absenting themselves for an hour or so, to give her an idea that something was being done. Poor Mrs. Knollys would have followed them had she been allowed, to wander through the purple galleries, calling Charles. It was well she could not ; for all Kaspar could do was to lower himself a hundred yards or so, chisel out a niche, and stand in it, smoking his honest pipe to pass the time, and trying to fancy

he could hear the murmur of the waters down below. Meantime Mrs. Knollys strained her eyes, peering downward from above, leaning on the rope about her waist, looking over the clear brink of the bergschrund.

It was the Herr Doctor Zimmermann who first told her the truth. Not that the good Doctor meant to do so. The Herr Doctor had had his attention turned to glaciers by some rounded stones in his garden by the Traunsee, and more particularly by the Herr Privatdocent Splüthner. Splüthner, like Uncle Toby, had his hobby-horse, his pet conjuring words, his gods *ex machina*, which he brought upon the field in scientific emergencies ; and these gods, as with Thales, were Fire and Water. Craters and flood were his accustomed scapegoats, upon whose heads were charged all things unaccountable ; and the Herr Doctor, who had only one element left to choose from, and that a passive one, but knew, on general principles, that Splüthner must be wrong, got as far off as he could and took Ice. And Splüthner having pooh-poohed this, Zimmermann rode his hypothesis with redoubled zeal. He became convinced that ice was the embodiment of orthodoxy. Fixing his professional spectacles on his substantial nose, he went into Carinthia and ascended the great Venice mountains, much as he would have performed any other scientific experiment. Then he encamped on the shores of the Pasterzen glacier, and proceeded to make a study of it.

So it happened that the Doctor, taking a morning stroll over the subject of his experiment, in search of small things, which might verify his theory, met Mrs. Knollys sitting in her accustomed place. The Doctor had been much puzzled, that morning, on finding in a rock at the foot of the glacier the impression, or sign-manual as it were, of a certain fish, whose acquaintance the Doctor had previously made only in tropical seas. This fact seeming, superficially, to chime in with Splüthnerian mistakes in a most heterodox way, the Doctor's mind had for a moment been diverted from the ice ; and he was wondering what the fish had been going to do in that particular gallery, and secretly doubting whether it had known its own mind, and gone thither with the full knowledge and permission of its maternal relative. Indeed, the good Doctor would probably have ascribed its presence to the malicious and personal causation of the devil, but that the one point on which he and Splüthner were agreed was the ignoring of unscientific hypotheses. The Doctor's objections to the devil were none the less strenuous for being purely scientific.

Thus ruminating, the Doctor came to the crevasse where Mrs. Knollys was sitting, and to which a little path had now been worn from the inn. There was nothing of scientific interest about the fair young English girl, and the Doctor did not notice her ; but he took from his waistcoat-pocket a leaden bullet, moulded by himself, and marked " Johannes Carpentarius, Juvavianus, A.U.C. 2590," and

dropped it, with much satisfaction, into the crevasse. Mrs. Knollys gave a little cry; the bullet was heard for some seconds tinkling against the sides of the chasm; the tinkles grew quickly fainter, but they waited in vain for the noise of the final fall. "May the Splüthner live that he may learn by it," muttered the Doctor; "I can never recover it."

Then he remembered that the experiment had been attended with a sound unaccounted for by the conformity of the bullet to the laws of gravitation; and looking up he saw Mrs. Knollys in front of him, no longer crying, but very pale. Zimmermann started, and in his confusion dropped his best brass registering thermometer, which also rattled down the abyss.

"You say," whispered Mrs. Knollys, "that it can never be recovered!"

"Madam," spoke the Doctor, doffing his hat, "how would you recofer from a blace when the smallest approximation which I haf yet been able to make puts the depth from the surface to the bed of the gletscher at vrom sixteen hundred to sixteen hundred and sixty *mètres* in distance?" Doctor Zimmermann spoke very good English; and he pushed his hat upon the back of his head, and assumed his professional attitude.

"But they all were trying——" Mrs. Knollys spoke faintly. "They said that they hoped he could be recovered." The stranger was the oldest gentleman she had seen, and Mrs. Knollys felt almost like confiding in him. "Oh, I must have the—the body." She closed in a sob; but the Herr Doctor caught at the last word, and this suggested to him only the language of scientific experiment.

"Recofer it? If, madam," Zimmermann went on with all the satisfaction attendant on the enunciation of a scientific truth, "we take a body and drop it in the schrund of this gletscher; and the ice-stream moves so slower at its base than on the upper part, and the ice will cover it; efen if we could reach the base, which is a mile in depth. Then, see you, it is all caused by the motion of the ice——"

But at this Mrs. Knollys had given a faint cry, and her guide rushed up angrily to the old professor, who stared helplessly forward. "God will help me, sir," said she to the Doctor, and she gave the guide her arm and walked wearily away.

The professor still stared in amazement at her enthusiasm for scientific experiment and the passion with which she greeted his discoveries. Here was a person who utterly refused to be referred to the agency of ice, or even, like Splüthner, of Fire and Water; and went out of the range of allowable hypotheses to call upon a Noumenon. Now both Splüthner and Zimmermann had studied all natural agencies and made allowance for them, but for the Divine they had always hitherto proved an alibi. The Doctor could make nothing of it.

At the inn that evening he saw Mrs. Knollys with swollen eyes; and remembering the scene of the afternoon, he made inquiries about her of the innkeeper. The latter had heard the guide's account of the meeting; and as soon as Zimmermann had made plain what he had told her of the falling body, "Triple blockhead!" said he. "*Es war ihr Mann.*" The Herr Professor staggered back into his seat; and the kindly innkeeper ran upstairs to see what had happened to his poor young guest.

Mrs. Knollys had recovered from the first shock by this time, but the truth could no longer be withheld. The innkeeper could but nod his head sadly, when she told him that to recover her Charles was hopeless. All the guides said the same thing. The poor girl's husband had vanished from the world as utterly as if his body had been burned to ashes and scattered in the pathway of the winds. Charles Knollys was gone, utterly gone; no more to be met with by his girl-wife, save as spirit to spirit, soul to soul, in ultramundane place. The fair-haired young Englishman lived but in her memory, as his soul, if still existent, lived in places indeterminate, unknowable to Doctor Zimmermann and his compeers. Slowly Mrs. Knollys acquired the belief that she was never to see her Charles again. Then, at last she resolved to go—to go home. Her strength now gave way; and when her aunt left she had with her but the ghost of Mrs. Knollys—a broken figure, drooping in the carriage, veiled in black. The innkeeper and all the guides stood bareheaded, silent, about the door, as the carriage drove off, bearing the bereaved widow back to England.

III

When the Herr Doctor had heard the innkeeper's answer, he sat for some time with his hands planted on his knees, looking through his spectacles at the opposite wall. Then he lifted one hand and struck his brow impatiently. It was his way, when a chemical reaction had come out wrong.

"Triple blockhead!" said he; "triple blockhead, thou art so bad as Splüthner." No self-condemnation could have been worse to him than this. Thinking again of Mrs. Knollys, he gave one deep, gruff sob. Then he took his hat, and going out, wandered by the shore of the glacier in the night, repeating to himself the Englishwoman's words: "*They said that they hoped he could be recovered.*" Zimmermann came to the tent where he kept his instruments, and stood there, looking at the sea of ice. He went to his measuring pegs, two rods of iron: one sunk deep and frozen in the glacier, the other drilled into a rock on the shore. "Triple blockhead!" said he again, "thou art worse than Splüthner. The Splüthner said the glacier did not move; thou, thou knowest that it does." He sighted from his rods to the mountain opposite. There was a slight and all but imperceptible change of direction from the day before.

He could not bear to see the English girl again, and all the next day was absent from the inn. For a month he stopped at Heiligenblut, and busied himself with his instruments. The guides of the place greeted him coldly every day, as they started on their glacier excursions or their chamois hunting. But none the less Zimmermann return the following summer, and work upon his great essay in refutation of the Splüthner.

Mrs. Knollys went back to the little cottage in Surrey, and lived there. The chests and cases she brought back lay unopened in the store-room ; the little rooms of the cottage that was to be their home remained bare and unadorned, as Charles had seen them last. She could not bring herself to alter them now. What she had looked forward to do with him she had no strength to do alone. She rarely went out. There was no place where she could go to think of him. He was gone ; gone from England, gone from the very surface of the earth. If he had only been buried in some quiet English churchyard, she thought—some green place lying open to the sun, where she could go and scatter flowers on his grave, where she could sit and look forward amid her tears to the time when she should lie side by side with him—they would then be separated for her short life alone. Now it seemed to her that they were far apart for ever.

But late the next summer she had a letter from the place. It was from Dr. Zimmermann. There is no need here to trace the quaint German phrases, the formalism, the cold terms of science in which he made his meaning plain. It spoke of erosion ; of the movement of the summer ; of the action of the under-waters on the ice. And it told her, with tender sympathy oddly blended with the pride of scientific success, that he had given a year's most careful study to the place ; with all his instruments of measurement he had tested the relentless glacier's flow ; and it closed by assuring her that her husband might yet be found—in five-and-forty years. In five-and-forty years—the poor Professor staked his scientific reputation on the fact—in five-and-forty years she might return, and the glacier would give up its dead.

This letter made Mrs. Knollys happier. It made her willing to live ; it made her almost long to live until old age—that her Charles's body might be given back. She took heart to beautify her little home. The trifling articles she had bought with Charles were now brought out—the little curiosities and pictures he had given her on their wedding journey. She would ask how such and such a thing looked, turning her pretty head to some kind visitor, as she ranged them on the walls ; and now and then she would have to lay the picture down and cry a little, silently, as she remembered where Charles had told her it would look best. Still, she sought to furnish the rooms as they had planned them in their mind ; she made her surroundings, as nearly as she could, as they had pictured them together. One room she never went into ; it was the room Charles

had meant to have for the nursery. She had no child.

But she changed, as we all change, with the passing of the years. I first remember her as a woman middle-aged, sweet-faced, hardly like a widow, nor yet like an old maid. She was rather like a young girl in love, with her lover absent on a long journey. She lived more with the memory of her husband, she clung to him more, than if she had had a child. She never married ; you would have guessed that ; but, after the Professor's letter, she never quite seemed to realise that her husband was dead. Was he not coming back to her ?

Never in all my knowledge of dear English women have I known a woman so much loved. In how many houses was she always the most welcome guest ! How often we boys would go to her for sympathy ! I know she was the confidante of all our love affairs. I cannot speak for girls ; but I fancy she was much the same with them. Many of us owed our life's happiness to her. She would chide us gently in our pettiness and folly, and teach us, by her very presence and example, what thing it was that alone could keep life sweet. How well we all remember the little Surrey cottage, the little home fireside where the husband had never been ! I think she grew to imagine his presence, even the presence of children : boys, curly-headed, like Charles, and sweet, blue-eyed daughters ; and the fact that it was all imagining seemed but to make the place more holy. Charles still lived to her as she had believed him in the month that they were married ; he lived through life with her as her young love had fancied he would be. She never thought of evil that might have occurred ; of failing affection, of cares. Her happiness was in her mind alone ; so all the earthly part was absent.

There were but two events in her life—that which was past and that which was to come. She had lived through his loss ; now she lived on for his recovery. But, as I have said, she changed, as all things mortal change ; all but the earth and the ice-stream and the stars above it. She read much, and her mind grew deep and broad, none the less gentle with it all ; she was wiser in the world ; she knew the depths of human hope and sorrow. You remember her only as an old lady whom we loved. Only her heart did not change—I forgot that ; her heart, and the memory of that last loving smile upon his face, as he bent down to look into her eyes, before he slipped and fell. She lived on, and waited for his body, as possibly his other self—who knows ?—waited for hers. As she grew older she grew taller ; her eyes were quieter, her hair a little straighter, darker than of yore ; her face changed, only the expression remained the same. Mary Knollys !

Human lives rarely look more than a year, or five, ahead ; Mary Knollys looked five-and-forty. Many of us wait, and grow weary in waiting, for those few years alone, and for some living friend. Mary Knollys waited five-and-forty years—for the dead. Still, after that first year, she never wore all black ; only silvery greys, and white

with a black ribbon or two. I have said that she almost seemed to think her husband living. She would fancy his doing this and that with her; how he would joy in this good fortune, or share her sorrows—which were few, mercifully. His memory seemed to be a living thing to her, to go through life with her, hand in hand; it changed as she grew old; it altered itself to suit her changing thought; until the very memory of her memory seemed to make it sure that he had really been alive with her, really shared her happiness or sorrow, in the far-off days of her earliest widowhood. It hardly seemed that he had been gone already then—she remembered him so well. She could not think that he had never been with her in their little cottage. And now, at sixty, I know she thought of him as an old person too; sitting by their fireside, late in life, mature, deep-souled, wise with the wisdom of years, going back with her, fondly, to recall the old, old happiness of their bridal journey, when they set off for the happy honeymoon abroad, and the long life now past stretched brightly out before them both. She never spoke of this, and you children never knew it; but it was always in her mind.

There was a plain stone in the little Surrey churchyard, now grey and moss-grown with the rains of forty years, on which you remember reading: "Charles Knollys—lost in Carinthia"—This was all she would have inscribed; he was but lost; no one *knew* that he was dead. Was he not yet to be found? There was no grassy mound beside it; the earth was smooth. Not even the date was there. But Mrs. Knollys never went to read it. She waited until he should come; until that last journey, repeating the travels of their wedding-days, when she should go to Germany to bring him home.

So the woman's life went on in England, and the glacier in the Alps moved on slowly; and the women waited for it to be gone.

IV

In the summer of 1882, the little Carinthian village of Heiligenblut was haunted by two persons. One was a young German scientist, with long hair and spectacles; the other was a tall English lady, slightly bent, with a face wherein the finger of time had deeply written tender things. Her hair was white as silver and she wore a long black veil. Their habits were strangely similar. Every morning, when the eastern light shone deepest into the ice-cavern at the base of the great Pasterzen glacier, these two would walk thither; then both would sit for an hour or two and peer into its depths. Neither knew why the other was there. The woman would go back for an hour in the late afternoon; the man, never. He knew that the morning light was necessary for his search.

The man was the famous young Zimmermann, son of his father, the old Doctor, long since dead. But the Herr Doctor had written a famous tract, when late in life, refuting all Splüthners' past,

present, and to come; and had charged his son, in his dying moments, as a most sacred trust, that he should repair to the base of the Pasterzen glacier in the year 1882, where he would find a leaden bullet, graven with his father's name, and the date A.U.C. 2590. All this would be vindication of his father's science. Splüthner, too, was a very old man, and Zimmermann the younger (for even he was no longer young) was fearful lest Splüthner should not live to witness his own refutation. The woman and the man never spoke to each other.

Alas, no one could have known Mrs. Knollys for the fair English girl who had been there in the young days of the century; not even the innkeeper, had he been there. But he, too, was long since dead. Mrs. Knollys was now bent and white-haired; she had forgotten, herself, how she had looked in those old days. Her life had been lived. She was now like a woman of another world; it seemed another world in which her fair hair had twined about her husband's fingers, and she and Charles had stood upon the evening mountain, and looked in one another's eyes. That was the world of her wedding-days, but it seemed more like a world she had left when born on earth. And now he was coming back to her in this. Meantime the great Pasterzen glacier had moved on, marking only the centuries; the men upon its borders had seen no change; the same great waves lifted their snowy heads upon its surface; the same crevasse still was where he had fallen. At night, the moonbeams, falling, still shivered off its glassy face; its pale presence filled the night, and immortality lay brooding in its hollows.

Friends were with Mrs. Knollys, but she left them at the inn. One old guide remembered her, and asked to bear her company. He went with her in the morning, and sat a few yards from her, waiting. In the afternoon she went alone. He would not have credited you, had you told him that the glacier moved. He thought it but an Englishwoman's fancy, but he waited with her. Himself had never forgotten that old day. And Mrs. Knollys sat there silently, searching the clear depths of the ice, that she might find her husband.

One night she saw a ghost. The latest beam of the sun, falling on a mountain opposite, had shone back into the ice-cavern; and seemingly deep within, in the grave azure light, she fancied she saw a face turned toward her. She even thought she saw Charles's yellow hair, and the self-same smile his lips had worn when he bent down to her before he fell. It could be but a fancy. She went home, and was silent with her friends about what had happened. In the moonlight she went back, and again the next morning before dawn. She told no one of her going; but the old guide met her at the door, and walked silently behind her. She had slept, the glacier ever present in her dreams.

The sun had not yet risen when she came; and she sat a long time in the cavern, listening to the murmur of the river, flowing

under the glacier at her feet. Slowly the dawn began, and again she seemed to see the shimmer of a face—such a face as one sees in the coals of a dying fire. Then the full sun came over the eastern mountain, and the guide heard a woman's cry. There before her was Charles Knollys! The face seemed hardly pale; and there was the same faint smile—a smile like her memory of it, five-and-forty years gone by. Safe in the clear ice, still, unharmed, there lay—O God! not her Charles; not the Charles of her own thought, who had lived through life with her and shared her sixty years; not the old man she had borne thither in her mind—but a boy, a boy of one-and-twenty lying asleep, a ghost from another world coming to confront her from the distant past, immortal in the immortality of the glacier. There was his quaint coat, of the fashion of half a century before; his blue eyes open; his young, clear brow; all the form of the past she had forgotten; and she his bride stood there to welcome him, with her wrinkles, her bent figure, and thin white hairs. She was living, he was dead; and she was two-and-forty years older than he.

Then at last the long-kept tears came to her, and she bent her white head in the snow. The old man came up with his pick, silently, and began working in the ice. The woman lay weeping, and the boy with his still, faint smile lay looking at them, through the clear ice-veil, from his open eyes.

I believe that the Professor found his bullet; I know not. I believe that the scientific world rang with his name and the thesis that he published on the glacier's motion, and the changeless temperature of his father's lost thermometer had shown. All this you may read. I know no more.

But I know that in the English churchyard there are now two graves, and a single stone, to Charles Knollys and Mary, his wife; and the boy of one-and-twenty sleeps there with his bride of sixty-three; his young frame with her old one, his yellow hair beside her white. And I do not know that there is not some place, not here, where they are still together, and he is twenty-one and she is still eighteen. I do not know this; but I know that all the pamphlets of the German doctor cannot tell me it is false.

Meantime the great Pasterzen glacier moves on, and the rocks with it; and the mountain flings his shadow of the planets in its face.

HAROLD FREDERIC
1856–1898

BROTHER SEBASTIAN'S FRIENDSHIP

I WHO tell this story am called Brother Sebastian. This name was given me more than forty years ago, while Louis Philippe was still king. My other name has been buried so long that I have nearly forgotten it. I think that my people are dead. At least I have heard nothing from them in many years. My reputation has always been that of a misanthrope—if not that, then of a dreamer. In the seminary I had no intimates. In the Order, for I am a Brother of the Christian Schools, my associates are polite—nothing more. I seem to be outside their social circles, their plans, their enjoyments. True, I am an old man now. But in other years it was the same. All my life I have been in solitude.

To this there is a single exception—one star shining in the blackness. And my career has been so bleak that, although it ended in deeper sadness than I had known before, I look back to the episode with gratitude. The bank of clouds which shut out this sole light of my life quickened its brilliancy before they submerged it.

After the terrible siege of '71, when the last German was gone, and our houses had breasted the ordeal of the Commune, I was sent to the South. The Superior thought my cheeks were ominously hollow, and suspected threats of consumption in my cough. So I was to go to the Mediterranean, and try its milder air. I liked the change. Paris, with its gloss of noisy gaiety and its substance of sceptical heartlessness, was repugnant to me. Perhaps it was because of this that Brother Sebastian had been mured up in the capital two-thirds of his life. If our surroundings are too congenial we neglect the work set before us. But no matter; to the coast I went.

My new home was a long-established house, spacious, venerable, and dreary. It was on the outskirts of an ancient town, which was of far more importance before our Lord was born than it has ever been since. We had little to do. There were nine brothers, a handful of resident orphans, and some threescore pupils. Ragged, stupid, big-eyed urchins they were, altogether different from the keen Paris boys. For that matter, every feature of my new home was odd.

The heat of the summer was scorching in its intensity. The peasants were much more respectful to our cloth, and, as to appearance, looked like figures from Murillo's canvases. The foliage, the wine, the language, the manners of the people—everything was changed. This interested me, and my morbidness vanished. The Director was delighted with my improved condition. Poor man! he was positive that my cheeks had puffed out perceptibly after the first two months. So the winter came—a mild, wet, muggy winter, wholly unlike my favourite sharp season in the North.

We were killing time in the library one afternoon, the Director and a Swiss Brother sitting by the lamp reading, I standing at one of the tall, narrow windows, drumming on the panes and dreaming. The view was not an inspiring one. There was a long horizontal line of pale yellow sky and another of flat, black land, out of which an occasional poplar raised itself solemnly. The great mass below the stripes was brown; above, gloomy grey. Close under the window two boys were playing in the garden of the house. I recall distinctly that they threw armfuls of wet fallen leaves at each other with a great shouting. While I stood thus, the Brother Servitor, Abonus, came in and whispered to the Director. He always whispered. It was not fraternal, but I did not like this Abonus.

"Send him up here," said the Director. Then I remembered that I had heard the roll of a carriage and the bell ring a few moments before. Abonus came in again. Behind him there was some one else, whose footsteps had the hesitating sound of a stranger's. Then I heard the Director's voice:

"You are from Algiers?"—"I am, Brother."

"Your name?"

"Edouard, Brother."

"Well, tell me more."

"I was under orders to be in Paris in January, Brother. As my health was poor, I received permission to come back to France this autumn. At Marseilles I was instructed to come here. So I am here. I have these papers from the Mother house, and from Etienne, Director, of Algiers."

Something in the voice seemed peculiar to me. I turned and examined the newcomer. He stood behind and to one side of the Director, who was laboriously deciphering some papers through his big horn spectacles. The light was not very bright, but there was enough to see a wonderfully handsome face, framed in dazzling black curls. Perhaps it looked the more beautiful because contrasted with the shaven grey poll and surly features of grim Abonus. But to me it was a dream of St. John the Evangelist. The eyes of the face were lowered upon the Director, so I could only guess their brilliancy. The features were those of an extreme youth—round, soft, and delicate. The expression was one of utter fatigue, almost pain. It bore out the statement of ill-health.

The Director had finished his reading. He lifted his head now and surveyed the stranger in turn. Finally, stretching out his fat hand, he said: "You are welcome, Brother Edouard. I see the letter says you have had no experience except with the youngest children. Brother Photius does that now. We will have you rest for a time. Then we will see about it. Meanwhile I will turn you over to the care of good Abonus, who will give you one of the north rooms."

So the two went out, Abonus shuffling his feet disagreeably. It was strange that he could do nothing to please me.

"Brother Sebastian," said the Director, as the door closed, "it is curious that they should have sent me a tenth man. Why, I lie awake now to invent pretences of work for those I have already. I will give up all show of teaching presently, and give out that I keep a hospital—a retreat for ailing brothers. Still, this Edouard is a pretty boy."

"Very."

"Etienne's letter says he is twenty and a Savoyard. He speaks like a Parisian."

"Very likely he is seminary bred," put in the Swiss.

"Whatever he is, I like his looks," said our Superior. This good man liked every one. His was the placid, easy Alsatian nature, prone to find goodness in all things—even crabbed Abonus. The Director, or, as he was known, Brother Elysee, was a stout, round little man, with a fine face and imperturbable good spirits. He was adored by all his subordinates. But I fancy he did not advance in favour at Paris very rapidly.

I liked Edouard from the first. The day after he came we were together much, and, when we parted after vespers, I was conscious of a vast respect for this newcomer. He was bright, ready-spoken, and almost a man of the world. Compared with my dull career, his short life had been one of positive gaiety. He had seen Frederic le Maitre at the Comédie Française. He had been at Court and spoken with the Prince Imperial. He was on terms of intimacy with Monsignori, and had been a protégé of the sainted Darboy. It was a rare pleasure to hear him talk of these things.

Before this, the ceaseless shifting of the brothers from one house to another had been indifferent to me. For the hundreds of strangers who came and went in the Paris house on Oudinot Street I cared absolutely nothing. I did not suffer their entrance nor their exit to excite me. This was so much the case that they called me a machine. But with Edouard this was different. I grew to love the boy from the first evening, when, as he left my room, I caught myself saying, "I shall be sorry when he goes." He seemed to be fond of me, too. For that matter, most of the brothers petted him, Elysee especially. But I was flattered that he chose me as his particular friend. For the first time my heart had opened.

We were alone one evening after the holidays. It was cold without, but in my room it was warm and bright. The fire crackled merrily, and the candles gave out a mellow and pleasant light. The Director had gone up to Paris, and his mantle had fallen on me. Edouard sat with his feet stretched to the fender, his curly head buried in the great curved back of my invalid chair, the red fire-light reflected on his childish features. I took pleasure in looking at him. He looked at the coals and knit his brows as if in a puzzle. I often fancied that something weightier than the usual troubles of life weighed upon him. At last he spoke, just as I was about to question him :

" Are you afraid to die, Sebastian ? "

Not knowing what else to say, I answered, " No, my child."

" I wonder if you enjoy life in community ? "

This was still stranger. I could but reply that I had never known any other life ; that I was fitted for nothing else.

" But still," persisted he, " would you not like to leave it—to have a career of your own before you die ? Do you think this is what a man is created for—to give away his chance to live ? "

" Edouard, you are interrogating your own conscience," I answered. " These are questions which you must have answered yourself before you took your vows. When you answered them you sealed them."

Perhaps I spoke too harshly, for he coloured and drew up his feet. Such shapely little feet they were. I felt ashamed of my crustiness.

" But, Edouard," I added, " your vows are those of the novitiate. You are not yet twenty-eight. You have still the right to ask yourself these things. The world is very fair to men of your age. Do not dream that I was angry with you."

He sat gazing into the fire. His face wore a strange, far-away expression, as he reached forth his hand, in a groping way, and rested it on my knee, clutching the gown nervously. Then he spoke slowly, seeking for words, and keeping his eyes on the flames.

" You have been good to me, Brother Sebastian. Let me ask you : May I tell you something in confidence—something which shall never pass your lips ? I mean it."

He had turned and poured those marvellous eyes into mine with irresistible magnetism. Of course I said, " Speak ! " and I said it without the slightest hesitation.

" I am not a Christian Brother. I do not belong to your Order. I have no claim upon the hospitality of this roof. I am an impostor ! "

He ejected these astounding sentences with an energy almost fierce, gripping my knee meanwhile. Then, as suddenly, his grasp relaxed, and he fell to weeping bitterly.

I stared at him solemnly, in silence. My tongue seemed paralysed. Confusing thoughts whirled in a maze unbidden through my head. I

could say nothing. But a strange impulse prompted me to reach out and take his hot hand in mine. It was piteous to hear him sobbing, his head upon his raised arm, his whole frame quivering with emotion. I had never seen any one weep like that before. So I sat dumb, trying in vain to answer this bewildering self-accusation. At last there came out of the folds of the chair the words, faint and tear-choked :

" You have promised me secrecy, and you will keep your word ; but you will hate me."

" Why, no, no, Edouard, not hate you," I answered, scarcely knowing what I said. I did not comprehend it at all. There was nothing more for me to say. Finally, when some power of thought returned, I asked :

" Of all things, my poor boy, why should you choose such a dreary life as this ? What possible reason led you to enter the community ? What attractions has it for you ? "

Edouard turned again from the fire to me. His eyes sparkled. His teeth were tight set.

" Why ? Why ? I will tell you why, Brother Sebastian. Can you not understand how a poor hunted beast should rejoice to find shelter in such an out-of-the-way place, among such kind men, in the grave of this cloister life ? I have not told you half enough. Do you not know in the outside world, in Toulon, or Marseilles, or that fine Paris of yours, there is a price on my head ?—or no, not that, but enemies that are looking for me, searching everywhere, turning every little stone for the poor privilege of making me suffer ? And do you know that these enemies wear shakos, and are called gens d'armes ? Would you be pleased to learn that it is a prison I escape by coming here ? *Now*, will you hate me ? "

The boy had risen from his chair. He spoke hurriedly, almost hysterically, his eyes snapping at mine like coals, his curls dishevelled, his fingers curved and stiffened like the talons of a hawk. I had never seen such intense earnestness in a human face. Passions like these had never penetrated the convent walls before.

While I sat dumb before him, Edouard left the room. I was conscious of his exit only in a vague way. For hours I sat in my chair beside the grate, thinking, or trying to think. You can see readily that I was more than a little perplexed. In the absence of Elysee, I was Director. The management of the house, its good fame, its discipline, all rested on my shoulders. And to be confronted by such an abyss as this ! I could do absolutely nothing. The boy had tied my tongue by the pledge. Besides, had I been unsworn, I am sure the idea of exposure would never have come to me. It was late before I retired that night. And I recall with terrible distinctness the chaos of brain and faculty which ushered in a restless sleep almost as dawn was breaking.

I had fancied that Brother Edouard would find life intolerable in

community after his revelation to me. He would be chary of meeting me before the brothers ; would be constantly tortured by fear of detection. As I saw this prospect of the poor innocent—for it was absurd to think of him as anything else—dreading exposure at each step in his false life, shrinking from observation, biting his tongue at every word—I was greatly moved by pity. Judge my surprise, then, when I saw him the next morning join in the younger brothers' regular walk around the garden, joking and laughing as I had never seen before. On his right was thin, sickly Victor, rest his soul ! and on the other pursy, thick-necked John, as merry a soul as Cork ever turned out. And how they laughed, even the frail consumptive ! It was a pleasure to see his blue eyes brighten with enjoyment and his warm cheeks blush. Above John's queer, Irish chuckle, I heard Edouard's voice, with its dainty Parisian accent, retailing jokes and leading in the laughter. The tramp was stretched out longer than usual, so pleasant did they find it. At this development I was much amazed.

The same change was noticeable in all that Edouard did. Instead of the apathy with which he had discharged his nominal duties, his baby pupils (for Photius had gone to Peru) now became bewitched with him. He told them droll stories, incited their rivalry in study by instituting prizes for which they struggled monthly, and, in short, metamorphosed his department. The change spread to himself. His cheeks took on a ruddier hue, the sparkle of his black eyes mellowed into a calm and steady radiance. There was no trace of feverish elation which, in solitude, recoiled to the brink of despair. He sang to himself evenings in his dormitory, clearly and with joy. His step was as elastic as that of any schoolboy. I often thought upon this change, and meditated how beautiful an illustration of confession's blessings it furnished. Frequently we were alone, but he never referred again to that memorable evening, even by implication. At first I dreaded to have the door close upon us, feeling that he must perforce seek to take up the thread where he had broken it then. But he talked of other things, and so easily and naturally that I felt embarrassed. For weeks I could not shake off the feeling that, at our next talk, he would broach the subject. But he never did.

Elysee returned, bringing me kind words from the Mother house, and a half-jocular hint that Superior General Philippe had me much in his mind. No doubt there had been a time when the idea of becoming a Director would have stirred my pulses. Surely it was gone now. I asked for nothing but to stay beside Edouard, to watch him, and to be near to lend him a helping hand when his hour of trouble should come. From that ordeal, which I saw approaching clearly and certainly, I shrank with all my nerves on edge. As the object of my misery grew bright-eyed and strong, I felt myself declining in health. My face grew thin, and I could not eat. I saw before my eyes always this wretched boy singing upon the brow of

the abyss. Sometimes I strove not to see his fall—frightful and swift. His secret seemed to harass him no longer. To me it was heavier than lead.

The evening the Brother Director returned, we sat together in the reading-room, the entire community. Elysee had been speaking of the Mother house, concerning which Brother Barnabas, an odd little Lorrainer who spoke better German than French, and who regarded Paris with the true provincial awe and veneration, exhibited much curiosity. We had a visitor, a gaunt, self-sufficient old Parisian, who had spent fourteen days in the Mazas prison during the Commune. I will call him Brother Albert, for his true name in religion is very well known. " I heard a curious story in the Vaugirard house," said the Brother Director, refreshing himself with a pinch of snuff, " which made the more impression upon me that I once knew intimately one of the persons in it. Martin Delette was my schoolmate at Pfalsbourg in the old days. A fine, studious lad he was, too. He took orders and went to the north, where he lived for many years a quiet country curé. He had a niece, a charming girl who is not now more than twenty or one-and-twenty. She was an orphan, and lived with him, going to a convent to school and returning at vacations. She was not a bad girl, but a trifle wayward and easily led. She gave the Sisters much anxiety. Last spring she barely escaped compromising the house by an escapade with a young *misérable* of the town, named Banin."

" I know your story," said Albert, with an air which hinted that this was a sufficient reason why the rest should not hear it. " Banin is in prison."

Elysee proceeded : " The girl was reprimanded. Next week she disappeared. To one of her companions she had confided a great desire to see Paris. So good Father Delette was summoned, and, after a talk with the Superioress, started post-haste for the capital. He found no signs either of poor Renée or of Banin, who had also disappeared. The Curé was nearly heart-broken. Each day, they told me, added a year to his appearance. He did not cease to importune the police chiefs and to haunt the public places for a glimpse of his niece's face. But the summer came, and no Renée. The Curé began to cough and grow weak. But one day in August the Director, good Prosper, called him down to the reception-room to see a visitor.

" ' There is news for you,' he whispered, pressing poor Martin's hand. In the room he found——"

" In the room he found——" broke in Albert, impertinently, but with a quiet tone of authority which cowed good Elysee, " a shabby man, looking like a poorly fed waiter. This person rose and said, ' I am a detective ; do you known Banin—young man, tall, blond, squints, broken tooth upper jaw, hat back on his head, much talk, hails from Rheims ? '

" ' Ah,' said Delette, ' I have not seen him, but I know him too well.'

" The detective pointed with his thumb over his left shoulder. ' He is in jail. He is good for twenty years. I did it myself. My name is So-and-so. Good job. Procurator said you were interested —some woman in the case, parishioner of yours, eh ? '

" ' My niece,' gasped the Curé.

" ' O ho ! does you credit ; pretty girl, curly head, good manners. Well, she's off. Good trick, too. She was the decoy. Banin stood in the shadow with club. She brought gentleman into alley, friend did work. That's Banin's story. Perhaps a lie. You have a brother in Algiers ? Thought so. Girl went out there once ? So I was told. Probably there now. African officers say not ; but they're a sleepy lot. If I was a criminal I'd go to Algiers. Good hiding.' The detective went. Delette stood where he was in silence. I went to him, and helped carry him upstairs. We put him in his bed. He died there."

Brother Albert stopped. He had told the story, dialogue and all, like a machine. We did not doubt its correctness. The memory of Albert had passed into a proverb years before.

Brother Albert raised his eyes again, and added, as if he had not paused, " He was ashamed to hold his head up. He might well be."

A strange, excited voice rose from the other end of the room. I looked and saw that it was Edouard who spoke. He had half arisen from his chair and scowled at Albert, throwing out his words with the tremulous haste of a young man first addressing an audience :

" Why should he be ashamed ? Was he not a good man ? Was the blame of his bad niece's acts his ? From the story she was well used and had no excuse. It is he who is to be pitied, not blamed ! "

The Brother Director smiled benignly at the young enthusiast. " Brother Edouard is right," he said. " Poor Martin was to be compassioned. None the less, my heart is touched for the girl. In Banin's trial it appeared that he maltreated her, and forced her to do what she did by blows. They were really married. Her neighbours gave Renée a name for gentleness and a good heart. Poor thing ! "

" And she never was found ? " asked Abonus, eagerly. He spoke very rarely. He looked now at me as he spoke, and there was a strange, ungodly glitter in his eyes which made me shudder involuntarily.

" Never," replied the Director, " although there is a reward, 5000 francs, offered for her recovery. Miserable child, who can tell what depths of suffering she may be in this moment ? "

" It would be remarkable if she should be found now, after all this time," said Abonus, sharply. His wicked, squinting old eyes were still fastened upon me. This time, as by a flash of eternal knowledge, I read their meaning, and felt the ground slipping from under me.

I shall never forget the night that followed. I made no pretence of going to bed. Edouard's little dormitory was in another part of the house. I went once to see him, but dared not knock, since Abonus was stirring about just across the hall, in his own den. I scratched on a piece of paper " Fly ! " in the dark, and pushed it under the door. Then I returned to walk my chamber, chafing like a wild beast. Ah, that night, that night !

With the first cock-crow in the village below, long before the bell, I left my room. I wanted air to breathe. I passed Abonus on the broad stairway. He strode up with unwonted vigour, bearing a heavy cauldron of water as if it had been straw. His gown was tumbled and dusty ; his greasy *rabat* hung awry about his neck. I had it in my head to speak with him, but could not. So the early hours, with devotions which I went through in a dream, wore on in horrible suspense, and breakfast came.

We sat at the long table, five on a side, the Director—looking red-eyed and weary from the evening's unaccustomed dissipation—sitting at the head. Below us stood Brother Albert, reading from Tertullian in a dry, monotonous chant. I recall, as I write, how I found a certain comfort in those splendid, sonorous Latin sentences, though I was conscious of not comprehending a word. I dreaded the moment they should end. Edouard sat beside me. We had not exchanged a word during the morning. How could I speak ? What should I say ? I was in a nervous flutter, like unto those who watch the final pinioning of a criminal whose guillotine is awaiting him. I could not keep my eyes from the fair face beside me, with its delicately cut profile, made all the more cameo-like by its pallid whiteness. The lips were tightly compressed. I could see askant that the tiny nostrils were quivering with excitement. All else was impassive on Edouard's face. We two sat waiting for the axe to fall.

It is as distinct as a nightmare to me. Abonus came in with his great server laden with victuals. He stumbled as he approached. He too was excited. He drew near, and stood behind me. I seemed to feel his breath penetrate my skull ; and yet I was forced to answer a whispered question of Brother John's with a smooth face. I saw Edouard suddenly reach for the milk glass in front of his plate, and hand it back to Abonus with the disdain of a duchess. He said, in a sharp, peremptory tone :

" Take it away and cleanse it. No one but a dirty monk would place such a glass on the table."

Albert ceased his reading. Abonus did not touch the glass. He shuffled hastily to the sideboard and deposited his burden. Then he came back with the same eager movement. He placed his fists on his hips, like a fish-woman, and hissed, in a voice choking with concentrated rage :

" No one but a woman would complain of it ! "

The brothers stared at each other and the two speakers in mute surprise. But they saw nothing in the words beyond a personal wrangle—though even that was such a novelty as to arrest instant attention. I busied myself with my plate. The Director assumed his harshest tone, and asked the cause of the altercation. Abonus leaned over and whispered something in his ear. I remember next a room full of confusion, a babel of conflicting voices, and a whirling glimpse of uniforms. Then I fainted.

When I revived I was in my own room, stretched upon my pallet. I looked around in a dazed way and saw the Brother Director and a young gendarme by the closed door. Something black and irregular in the outline of the bed at my side attracted my eyes. I saw that it was Edouard's head buried in the drapery. As in a dream I laid my numb hand upon those crisp curls. I was an old man, she was a weak, wretched girl. She raised her face at my touch, and burned in my brain a vision of stricken agony, of horrible soul-pain, which we liken, for want of a better simile, to the anguish in the eyes of a dying doe. Her lips moved ; she said something, I know not what. Then she went, and I was left alone with Elysee. His words—broken, stumbling words—I remember :

" She asked to see you, Sebastian, my friend. I could not refuse. Her papers were forged. She did come from Algiers, where her uncle is a Capuchin. I do not ask, I do not wish to know, how much you know of this. Before my Redeemer, I feel nothing but pity for the poor lamb. Lie still, my friend ; try to sleep. We are both older men than we were yesterday."

There is little else to tell. Only twice have reflections of this episode in my old life reached me in the seclusion of a missionary post at the foot of the Andes. I learned a few weeks ago that the wretched Abonus had bought a sailor's café on the Toulon wharves with his five thousand francs. And I know also that the heart of the Marshal-President was touched by the sad story of Renée, and that she left the prison La Salpêtrière to lay herself in penitence at the foot of Mother Church. This is the story of my friendship.

GERTRUDE ATHERTON

B. 1857

THE GREATEST GOOD FOR THE GREATEST NUMBER

MORTON BLAINE returned to New York from his brief vacation to find awaiting him a frantic note from John Schuyler, the man nearer to him than any save himself, imploring him to "come at once."

The note was twenty-four hours old. Blaine, without changing his travelling clothes, rang for a cab and was driven rapidly up the Avenue. He was a man of science, not of enthusiasms, cold, unerring, brilliant; a superb intellectual machine, unremittingly polished, and enlarged with every improvement. But for one man he cherished an abiding sympathy; to that man he hastened on the slightest summons, as he hastened now.

As the cab rolled over the asphalt of the Avenue, Blaine glanced idly at the stream of carriages returning from the Park, lifting his hat to many of the languid pretty women. He owed his minor fame to his guardianship of fashionable nerves. He could calm hysteria with a pressure of his cool, flexible hand or a sudden modulation of his harsh voice. And women dreaded his wrath. There were those who averred that his eyes could smoke.

He leaned forward and raised his hat with sudden interest. She who returned his bow was as cold in her colouring as a winter night, but possessed a strength of line and depth of eye which suggested to the analyst her power to give the world a shock did Circumstance cease to run abreast of her. She was leaning back indolently in the open carriage, the sun slanting into her luminous skin and eyes. As her eyes met those of the doctor her mouth convulsed suddenly, and a glance of mutual understanding passed between them. Then she raised her head with a defiant, almost reckless movement.

Blaine reached his friend's house in a moment. The man who had summoned him was walking aimlessly up and down his library. He was unshaven; his hair and his clothing were disordered. His face had the modern beauty of strength and intellect and passion and weakness. A flash of relief illuminated it as Blaine entered.

"She has been terrible!" he said. "Terrible! I have not had

the courage to call in any one else, and I am worn out. She is asleep, and I got out of the room for half an hour. The nurse is exhausted. Do stay to-night."

"I will stay. Let us go up-stairs."

As they reached the second landing two handsome children romped across the hall and flung themselves upon their father.

"Where have you been?" they demand. "Why do you shut yourself up on the third floor with mamma all the time? When will she get well?"

Schuyler kissed them and bade them return to the nursery.

"How long can I keep it from them?" he asked bitterly. "What an atmosphere for children—my children!—to grow up in!"

"If you would do as I wish, and send her where she belongs——"

"No. She is my wife. Moreover, concealment then would be impossible."

They had reached the third floor. He inserted a key in a door, hesitated a moment, then said abruptly: "I saw in a paper that *she* had returned. Can it be possible?"

"I saw her on the Avenue a few moments ago."

Was it the doctor's imagination, or did the goaded man at his side flash him a glance of appeal?

They entered a room whose doors and windows were muffled. The furniture was solid, too solid to be moved except by muscular arms.

On the bed lay a woman with ragged hair and sunken yellow face, but even in her ruin indefinably elegant. Her parted lips were black and blistered within; her shapely, skinny hands clutched the quilt with the tenacious suggestion of the eagle—that long-lived defiant bird. At the bedside sat a vigorous woman, the pallor of fatigue on her face.

"Give me a drink," she said feverishly. "Water! water! water!" She panted, and her tongue protruded slightly. Her husband turned away, his shoulders twitching. The nurse held a silver goblet to the woman's lips. She drank greedily, then scowled up at the doctor.

"You missed it," she said. "I should be glad, for I hate you, only you give me more relief than they. They are afraid. They tried to fool me, the idiots! But they didn't try it twice. I bit."

She laughed and threw her arms above her head. The loose sleeves of her gown fell back, disclosing arms speckled as from an explosion of gunpowder.

"Just an ordinary morphine fiend," thought the doctor. "And she is the wife of John Schuyler!"

An hour after dinner he told the husband and nurse to go to bed. For a while he read, the woman sleeping profoundly. The house was absolutely still. Had pandemonium reigned he could hardly have heard of it from this isolated room. Despite the stillness, the doctor had to strain his ear to catch the irregular breathing of the sick

woman. He had a singular feeling, although the most unimaginative of men, that this third floor, containing only himself and the woman, had been sliced from the rest of the house and hung suspended in space, independent of natural laws. Then the idea shaped itself, born of another, as yet unacknowledged, skulking in the recesses of his brain. Going to the bed, he looked down upon the woman, coldly, reflectively—exactly as he had often watched the quivering of an animal—dissected alive.

Studying this man's face, it was impossible to imagine it agitated by any passion except thirst for knowledge. The skin was as white as marble ; the profile was straight and mathematical, the mouth a straight line, the chin as square as that of a chiselled Fate. The jaw was prominent, powerful, relentless. The eyes were deeply set and grey as polished steel. The large brow was luminous, very full—an index to the terrible intellect of the man.

As he looked down on the woman his nostrils twitched, and his lips compressed firmly. Then he smiled. It was an odd, almost demoniacal smile.

" A physician," he said half aloud, " has almost as much power as God. The idea strikes me that we are the personification of that useful symbol."

He plunged his hands into his pockets, and walked up and down the room.

" These are the facts in the case," he continued. " The one man I love and unequivocally respect is tied, hand and foot, to that unsexed dehumanised morphine receptacle on the bed. She is hopeless. Every known specific has failed, *must* fail, for she loves the vice. He has one of the best brains of this day prolific in brains ; a distressing capacity for affection, human to the core. At the age of forty-two, in the maturity of his mental powers, he carries with him a constant sickening sense of humiliation ; a proud man, he lives in daily fear of exposure and shame. At the age of forty-two, in the maturity of his manhood, he meets the woman who conquers his heart, his imagination, by making other women abhorrent to him, who allures and maddens with the certainty of her power to make good his ideal of her. He cannot marry her ; that animal on the bed is capable of living for twenty years.

" So much for him. A girl of twenty-eight, whose wealth and brain and beauty, and that other something that has not yet been analysed and labelled, have made her a social star ; who has come to wonder, then to resent, then to yawn at the general vanity of life, is suddenly swept out of her calm orbit by a man's passion ; and, with the swiftness of decision natural to her, goes to Europe. She returns in less than three months. For these two people there is but one sequel. The second chapter will be written the first time they are alone. They will go to Europe. What will be the rest of the book ?

" First, there will be an ugly and reverberating scandal. In the course of a year or two she will compel him to return in the interest of his career. She will not be able to remain ; so proud a woman could not stand the position. Again he will go with her. In a word, my friend's career will be ruined.

" So much for them. Consider the other victims—the children. A morphine-mother in an asylum, a father in a strange land with a woman who is not his wife, the world cognisant of the facts of the case. They grow up at odds with society. Result, they are morbid, warped, unmoral. In trite old English, their lives are ruined, as are all lives that have not had a fair chance."

He returned to the bedside. He laid his finger on the woman's pulse.

" No morphine to-night and she dies. A worthless wretch is sent where she belongs. Four people are saved."

His breast swelled. His grey eyes seemed literally to send forth smoke ; they suggested some noiseless deadly weapon of war. He exclaimed aloud : " My God ! what a power to lie in the hands of one man ! I stand here the arbiter of five destinies. It is for *me* to say whether four people shall be happy or wretched, saved or ruined. I might say, with Nero, ' I am God ! ' " He laughed. " I am famed for my power to save where others have failed. I am famed in the comic weeklies for having ruined the business of more undertakers than any physician of my day. That has been my rôle, my professional pride. I have never felt so proud as now."

The woman, who had been moving restlessly for some time, twitched suddenly and uncontrollably. She opened her eyes.

" Give it to me—quick ! " she demanded. Her voice, always querulous, was raucous ; her eyes were wild.

" No," he said deliberately, " you will have no more morphine."

She stared at him incredulously, then laughed.

" Stop joking," she said roughly. " Give it to me—quick. I am very weak."

" No," he said.

Then her eyes expanded with terror. She raised herself on one arm.

" You mean that ? " she asked.

" Yes."

He watched her critically. She would be interesting.

" You are going to cure me with drastic measures ; others have failed."

" Possibly."

Her face contracted with hatred. She had been a rather clever woman, and she believed that he was going to experiment with her. But she had also been a strong-willed woman and used to command since babyhood.

" Give me that morphine," she said imperiously. " If you don't

I'll be dead before morning."

He stood imperturbable. She sprang from the bed and flung herself upon him, strong with anger and apprehension.

"Give it to me!" she screamed. "Give it to me." She strove to bite him.

He caught her by the shoulder and held her at arm's length. She writhed and struggled and cursed. Her oaths might have been learned in the gutter. She kicked at him and strove to reach him with her nails, clawing the air.

"What an exquisite bride she was!" he thought. "And what columns of rubbish have been printed about her and her entertainments!"

The woman was shrieking and struggling.

"Give it to me! You brute! You fiend! I always hated you! Give it to me! I am dying! Help! Help!" But the walls were padded.

He permitted her to fling herself upon him, easily brushing aside her jumping fingers and snapping teeth. He knew that her agony was frightful. Her body was a net-work of hungry nerves. The diseased pulp of her brain had ejected every thought but one. She squirmed like an old autumn leaf about to fall. Her ugly face became tragic. The words shot from her dry, contracted throat: "Give me the morphine! Give me the morphine!"

Suddenly realising the immutability of the man in whose power she was, she sprang from him and ran frantically about the room, uttering harsh, bleat-like cries. She pulled open the drawers of a chest, rummaging among its harmless contents, gasping, quivering, bounding, as her tortured nerves commanded. When she had littered the floor with the contents of the chest she ran about screaming hopelessly. The doctor shuddered, but he thought of the four innocent people in her power and in his.

She fell on the floor, biting the carpet, striking out her arms, tearing her nightgown into strips; then lay quivering, a hideous, speckled, uncanny thing, who should have been embalmed and placed beside the Venus of Milo.

She raised herself on her hands and crawled along the carpet, casually at first, as a man stricken in the desert may, half-consciously, continue his search for water. Then the doctor, intently watching her, saw an expression of hope leap into her bulging eyes. She scrambled past him towards the wash-stand. Before he could define her purpose, she had leaped upon a goblet inadvertently left there and had broken it on the marble. He reached her just in time to save her throat.

Then she looked up at him pitifully. "Give it to me!"

She pressed his knees to her breast. The red, burned-out, tear-ducts yawned. The tortured body stiffened and relaxed.

"Poor wretch!" he thought. "But what is the physical agony

of a night to the mental anguish of a lifetime ? "

" Once ! once ! " she gasped, " or kill me. Kill me ! Kill me ! "

He picked her up, put a fresh nightgown on her, and laid her on the bed. She remained as he placed her, her eyes staring at the ceiling.

He returned to his chair and looked at his watch. " She may live two hours," he thought. " Possibly three. It is twelve. There is plenty of time."

The room grew as still as the mountain-top whence he had that day returned. He attempted to read, but could not. The sense of supreme power filled his brain. He was the gigantic factor in the fates of four.

Then Circumstance, the outwardly wayward, the ruthlessly sequential, played him an ugly trick. His eyes, glancing idly about the room, were arrested by the big old-fashioned rocking-chair. There was something familiar about it. Soon he remembered that it resembled one in which his mother used to sit. She had been an invalid, and the most sinless and unworldly woman he had ever known. He recalled, with a touch of the old impatience, how she had irritated his active, aspiring, essentially modern mind with her cast-iron precepts of right and wrong. Her conscience flagellated her, and she had striven to develop her son's to the goodly proportion of her own. As he was naturally a truthful and upright boy, he resented her homilies mightily. " Conscience," he once broke out impatiently, " has made more women bores, more men failures, than any ten vices in the rogues' calendar."

She had looked in pale horror, and taken refuge in an axiom : " Conscience makes cowards of us all."

He moved his head with involuntary pride. The greatest achievement of civilisation was the triumph of the intellect over inherited impressions. Every normal man was conscientious by instinct, however he might outrage the sturdy little judge clinging tenaciously to his bench in the victim's brain. It was only when the brain grew big with knowledge and the will clasped it with fingers of steel that the little judge was throttled, then cast out.

Conscience. What was it like ? The doctor had forgotten. He had never committed a murder nor a dishonourable act. Had the impulse of either been in him, his cleverness would have put it aside with a smile of scorn. He had never scrupled to thrust from his path whoever or whatever stood in his way, and had stridden on without a backward glance. His profession had involved many experiments that would have made quick havoc of even the ordinary man's conscience.

Conscience. An awkward guest for an unsuspected murderer ; for the groundling whose heredity had not been conquered by brain. Fancy being pursued by the spectre of the victim !

The woman on the bed gave a start and groan that recalled him

to the case in hand. He rose and walked quickly to her side. Her eyes were closed, her face was black with congested blood. He laid his finger on her pulse.

"It will not be long now," he thought.

He went toward his chair. He felt a sudden distaste for it, a desire for motion. He walked up and down the room rather more rapidly than before.

"If I were an ordinary man," he thought, "I suppose that tortured creature on the bed would haunt me to my death. Rot! A murderer I should be called if the facts were known, I suppose. Well, she is worse. Did I permit her to live she would make the living hell of four people."

The woman gave a sudden awful cry, the cry of a lost soul shot into the night of eternity. The stillness had been so absolute, the cry broke that stillness so abruptly and so horribly, that the doctor, strong-brained, strong-nerved as he was, gave a violent start, and the sweat started from his body.

"I am a fool," he exclaimed angrily, welcoming the sound of his voice; "but I wish to God it were day and there were noises outside."

He strode hurriedly up and down the room, casting furtive glances at the bed. The night was quiet again, but still that cry rang through it. He recalled the theory that sound never dies. The waves of space had yielded this to him.

"Good God!" he thought. "Am I going to pieces. If I let this wretch, this criminal die, I save four people. If I let her live, I ruin their lives. The life of a man of brain and pride and heart; the life of a woman of beauty and intellect and honour; the lives of two children of unknown potentialities, for whom the world has now a warm heart. 'The greatest good of the greatest number'—the principle that governs civil law. Has not even the worthy individual been sacrificed to it again and again? Does it not hang the criminal dangerous to the community? And is that called murder? What am I at this moment but law epitomised? Shall I hesitate? My God, am I hesitating? Conscience—is it that? A superfluous instinct transmitted by my ancestors and coddled by a woman—is it that which has sprung from its grave, rattling its bones? '*Conscience makes*'—oh, shame that I should succumb when so much is at stake—that I should hesitate when the welfare of four human beings trembles in the balance! '*Conscience*'—that in the moment of my supreme power I should falter!"

He returned to the woman. He reached his finger toward her pulse, then hurriedly withdrew it and resumed his restless march.

"This is only a nightmare, born of the night and the horrible stillness. To-morrow in the world of men it will be forgotten, and I shall rejoice. . . . But there will be recurring hours of stillness, of solitude. Will this night repeat itself? Will that thing on the bed

haunt me? Will that cry shriek in my ears? Oh, shame on my selfishness! What am I thinking of? To let that base, degraded wretch exist, that I may live peaceably with my conscience? To let four others go to their ruin, that I may escape a few hours of torment? That I—*I*—should come to this! 'The greatest good of the greatest number. The greatest' . . . 'Conscience makes cowards of us all'!"

To his unutterable self-contempt and terror, he found his will for once powerless to control the work of the generations that had preceded him. His iron jaw worked spasmodically, his grey eyes looked frozen. The marble pallor of his face was suffused with a tingle of green.

"I despise myself!" he exclaimed, with fierce emphasis. "I loathe myself! I will not yield! '*Conscience*'—they shall be saved, and by me. '*The greatest*'—I will maintain my intellectual supremacy—that, if nothing else. She shall die!"

He halted. Perhaps she was already dead. He could reach the door in a bound and run downstairs and out of the house. To be followed . . .

He ran to the bed. The woman still breathed faintly; her mouth was twisted into a sardonic and pertinent expression. His hand sought his pocket and brought forth a case. He opened it and stared at the hypodermic syringe. His trembling fingers closed about it and moved toward the woman. Then, with an effort so violent he fancied he could hear his tense muscles creak, he straightened himself and turned his back upon the bed. At the same moment he dropped the instrument to the floor and set his heel upon it.

EDGAR SALTUS

1855–1924

A MAID OF MODERN ATHENS

"It was this way," she said, and as she spoke she stooped and flicked a speck of dust from her habit. "It was this way: The existence which I lead in the minds of other people is absolutely of no importance whatever. Now wait: I care a great deal whether school keeps or not, but in caring I try chiefly to be true to myself. I may stumble; I may not. In any event I seek the best. As for the scandal of which you speak, that is nonsense. There is no criterion. That which is permissible here is inhibited yonder, and what is permissible yonder is inhibited here. Scandal, indeed!"

There was something about her that stirred the pulse. She was fair; the sort of girl whose photograph is an abomination, and yet in whose face and being a charm resides, a charm intangible and coercive, inciting to better things. A Joan of Arc, in a tailor-made gown.

"You remember how it was when we were younger—— You—well, there is no use in going into that. You had a mother to think for you; I had no one. I had to solve problems unassisted. The weightiest of all was marriage, and that, in my quality of heiress, I found perplexing to a degree. But how is it possible, I asked myself, how can a girl pledge her life to a man of whom she knows absolutely nothing? For, practically speaking, what does the average girl know of the man whose name she takes? It may be different in the country; but in town! Listen to me: a girl 'comes out,' as the saying is; she meets a number of men, the majority of whom are more or less agreeable and well-bred—when she is present. But what are they when she is not? At dinners and routs, or when she receives them in her own house, they are at their best; if they are not they stay away. It is not so difficult to be agreeable once in a while, but to be so always is a question not of mask but of nature. It seems to me that when an intelligent woman admires her brother it is because that brother is really an admirable man. Has she not every opportunity of judging? But what opportunity is given to the girl whom a man happens to take in and out at dinner, or whom she sees for an hour or two now and then? You must admit that her facilities are

slight. That was the way it was with me, and that was the way I fancied it would continue to be, and I determined that it was better to remain spinster for ever than to take a man on trust and find that trust misplaced. Suspicious? No, I am not suspicious. When your husband bought this property did you think him suspicious because he had the title searched? Very good; then perhaps you will tell me that the marriage contract is less important than the conveyance of real estate? Besides, my doubts on the subject of love would have defied a catalogue. When I read of the follies and transports of which it was reported to be the prime factor, I was puzzled. It seemed to me that I had either a fibre more or a fibre less than other girls, I could not comprehend. No man I had ever met—and certainly I had met many—had ever caused me so much as a fleeting emotion. There were men with whom I found speech agreeable and argument a pleasure, but, had they worn frocks instead of trousers, such enjoyment as I experienced would have been unimpaired. You see, it was purely mental. And when—there, I remember one man in particular. As Stella said of Swift, he could talk beautifully about a broomstick. He knew the reason of things; he was up in cuneiform inscriptions and at home with meteorites; he was not prosy, and, what is more to the point, he never treated a subject as though it were a matter of life and death. He was not bad-looking, either, and he was the only man of my acquaintance who both understood Kant and got his coats from Poole. That man I liked very much. He was better than a book. I could ask him questions, a thing you can't do even of an encyclopædia. One fine day the personal pronoun cropped out. We had been discussing Herbert Spencer's theory of conceivability, and abruptly, with an inappositeness which, now I think of it, would have been admirable on the stage, but which in the drawing-room was certainly misplaced, he asked me to take a walk with him down the aisle of the swellest church in the commonwealth. I mourned his loss, as we say. But wasn't it stupid of him? But what does get into men? Why should they think that, because a girl is liberal with odd evenings, she is pining for the marriage covenant?"

With the whip she held she gave the hem of her habit a sudden lash.

"That episode gave me food for thought. H'm. By and by the scene was occupied by a young man who was an authority on orchids, and wrote sonnets for the *Interstate*. My dear, a more guileful little wretch never breathed. When my previous young man disappeared, I felt that I had been hasty. I desired nothing so much as an increase in my store of knowledge, and I determined that if another opportunity occurred I would not be in such a hurry to shut the door on entertaining developments. Consequently, when my poet turned up I was as demure as you please. He was a fox, that

man. He began with the fixed purpose of irritating me into liking him. The tactics he displayed were unique. He never came when I expected him, and when he did come he was careful to go just when he thought he had scored a point. If any other man happened in, he first eclipsed him and then left him to me. I saw through that game at once. He understood perfectly that if I preferred the other man I was all the more obliged to him for going, and if I preferred him to the other man I was the sorrier to see him leave. In addition to this, whatever subject I broached, he led it by tangential flights to Love. That Machiavelli *en herbe* knew that to talk love is to make love. And talk of love he did, but in the most impersonal manner. To hear him descant you would have thought his wings were sprouting. Love, as he expressed it, was a sentiment which ennobled every other ; a purifying and exalting light. It was the most gracious of despots. It banished the material ; it beckoned to the ideal. It turned satiety into a vagabond that had not where to lay its head. It was the reduction of the world, creation, and all the universe to a single being. It was an enchanted upland, inhibited to the herd. It was a chimera to the vulgar, a crown to the refined. ' A perfect lover,' he said, ' must needs be an aristocrat.' And if you will believe me, I actually thought he meant what he said. In spite of myself, I was becoming interested. There were new horizons before me. I seemed to discern something hitherto unseen. My dear, for the moment I felt myself going. I was at the foot of his enchanted upland. I was almost willing to take him for guide. At first I had been merely amused. Once, even, when he quoted the ' Two souls with but a single thought,' I suggested that that must mean but half a thought apiece. The quiet dignity which he then displayed almost fetched me. He had the air of a prelate in whose presence an oaf has trampled on a crucifix. He kept up that sort of thing for two months. To me his sincerity was beyond peradventure. Not once did he speak in a personal way. I was beginning to wonder when he would stop beating about the bush ; and I not only wondered, I believe I even wished that he would be a little more enterprising and a trifle less immaterial. Presently I detected a symptom or two which told me that the end of the beginning was in sight. I suppose my manner was more encouraging. In any event, one evening he took my hand and kissed it. From nine-and-ninety men out of a hundred I should have thought nothing of such a thing. In Europe it is an empty homage, a pantomime expressive of thanks. As I say, then, in any other man I should not have given it a second thought, but he had never done it before.

" The next day I lunched with Mrs. Bunker Hill. I mentioned his name ; I suppose it was running in my mind. And then, my dear, Fanny began. Well, the things she told me about that transcendental young man were of such a nature that when he next called I was not at home. He came again, of course. And again. He

sent me a note, which I returned unopened. That, I confess, was a foolish thing to do. It showed him that I was annoyed. I might better have left it unanswered. After all, there is nothing so impenetrable as silence. Finally, he got one of his friends to come and reconnoitre. Indeed, he did not desist until I had an opportunity of cutting him dead. I was angry, I admit it. And it was after that little experience that I determined, the next time I felt myself going, I would make sure beforehand where I was going to. H'm. I wonder what his sister thought of him. You see, it was not that I had fallen in love ; the word was as unintelligible to me as before, but I had fancied that, through him, I might intercept some inkling of its meaning, and I was put out at having been tricked. *Ach ! diese Männer !*"

Beneath descending night the sky was gold-barred and green. In the east the moon glittered like a sickle of tin. The air was warm and freighted with the odours of August. You could hear the crickets hum, and here and there was the spark of a fire-fly gyrating in loops of flame. From across the meadows came the slumbrous tinkle of a bell.

She raised a gloved hand to her brow and looked down at the yellow road. To one who loved her, the Helen for whom the war of the world was fought was not so fair as she. And presently the hand moved about the brow, and, resting a second's space on the coil just above the neck, fell again to her side.

" Well," she continued, " you can see how it was. Even before the illusion, disillusionment had come. That winter I went with the Bunker Hills to Monaco. Were it not for the riff-raff, that place would be a paradise in duodecimo. We had a villa, of course. One evening, shortly after our arrival, we went to the Casino. For the fun of the thing I put some money on the *Trente et Quarante*. I did nothing but win. It was tiresome ; I would rather have lost. I had to speak to the dealer, and that, as you can fancy, was not to my liking. There was a great crowd. One little old woman put money wherever I did. She won a lot, too. But one man, whom I could not help noticing, backed red when I was on black, and vice versa. He did it persistently, intentionally, and he lost every time. Finally one of the croupiers told me that my stake was above the maximum, and asked how much I would risk. I was tired of answering his questions, and I turned away. A lackey followed me with a salver covered with gold and notes—the money I had won. I didn't want it ; I had not even a pocket to put it in, and the purse which I held in my hand would not have held a fraction of it. It was a nuisance. I turned it over to Bunker, and presently we all went out on the terrace that overhangs the sea. It was a perfect night. In the air was a caress, and from the Mediterranean came a tonic. While I was enjoying it all, a beggar ambled up on a crutch and begged a franc. I took from Bunker the money I had won and gave him thirty

thousand. You should have heard Bunker then. I actually believe that if I had been his wife instead of his guest he would have struck me. I suppose it was an absurd thing to do. But the next time you are in search of a new sensation, do something of the same sort. The beggar became transfigured. He looked at the gold and notes, and then at me. I do not think I shall ever forget the expression in his face. Did you ever see a child asleep—a child to whom some wonderful dream has come? It was at once infantile and radiant. And all the while Bunker was abusing me like a pickpocket. The beggar gave me one look, dropped on his knees, caught the hem of my skirt, kissed it, threw away his crutch, and *ran*. I burst out laughing, and Bunker, in spite of his rage, burst out laughing too. Fanny called us a pair of idiots, and said that if I was as lavish as that it would be better and wiser, and far more Christian, to keep my money for indigent and deserving Bostonese than to bestow it as a premium on Monacan vice and effrontery. Just as she was working herself into big words and short sentences, the man whom I had noticed at the tables came along. He had met her before, and now, as he expressed it, he precipitated himself to renew the expression of his homage. Fanny, after introducing him to me, began at once on the tale of my misconduct. He had a complexion of the cream-tint order, and a moustache blacker than hate. He was a Florentine, I discovered, a marquis with a name made up of v's, sonorous o's, and n's. We had found a table, and Bunker ordered some ices. The night was really so perfect, and the ice so good, that, like Mme. de Staël over her sherbet in moonlit Venice, I almost wished it were a sin to sit there. The marquis was in very good form and inclined to do the devoted on the slightest provocation.

"'Is mademoiselle,' he asked me, 'is mademoiselle as disdainful of the heart as she is of gold?'

"'Absolutely,' I answered—a remark which may have sounded snobbish, but still was wholly true.

"'Ah!' he exclaimed, 'there are birds that do not sing untaught.'

"'You are beginning well,' I thought.

"The next day he lunched with us, and came again in the evening. In addition to his marquisate, he had a fluty tenorino voice; what they call a *voix de salon*. He sang all sorts of things for us, and he sang them very well. When the air was lively he looked at Fanny, when it was sentimental he looked at me. Thereafter I saw a great deal of him. One day we would make up a party for Nice, on another we would go to San Remo, or else back in the mountains, or to Grasse. Of course, as you know, customs over there are such that he had no opportunity of being alone with me, even for a second; but he had an art of making love in public which must have been the result of long practice. It was both open and discreet. It was not in words; it was in the inflection of the voice and in the paying of the thousand and one little attentions which foreigners perform so well. Now, to

me, a tiara might be becoming, but it is an ornament for which I have never felt the vaguest covetousness. Moreover, I had no intention of marrying an Italian, however fabulous the ancestry of that Italian might be. And, besides, the attentions of which I was the apparent object were, I knew, addressed less to me than to the blue eyes of my cheque-book. The Florentine nobleman who is disposed to marry a dowerless American is yet to be heard from. This by the way. However, I accepted the attentions with becoming grace, and marked the cunning of his tricks. One evening he did not put in an appearance, but at midnight, I heard, on the road before my window, the tinkle of a guitar. I did not need to peer through the curtains to know from whom it came. First he sang a song of Tosti's, and then the serenade from ' Don Pasquale ' :

Com' è gentil, la notte in mezz' Aprile.
. . . . .
Poi quando sarò morto, tu piangerai,
Ma ritornarmi in vita, tu non potrai.

Sentimental ? Yes, sentimental to the last degree. But on the Riviera, in spring, and at night, one's fancy turns to that sort of thing with astounding ease. I listened with unalloyed pleasure. It was like a Boccaccian echo. And as I listened I wondered whether I should ever learn what love might be. The idea of taking a course of lessons from a man who strummed on a guitar in front of my window never entered my head. The next day Fanny came to me in a state of great excitement. The guitarist, it appeared, had, with all proper and due formality, asked leave to place his coronet at my feet. *Ce que j' ai ri !*

" You can hear Fanny from here. She accused me of flirting with the man. ' You have no right,' she said, ' to treat him as though he were a college boy at Mt. Desert.' What he had done to make her so vicious I never discovered. It must have been the title ; a title always went to her head. Poor Fanny ! That evening, when he came, she declined to be present. I had to see him alone. My dear, he was too funny. He had prepared a little speech which he got off very well, only at the end of it he lapsed into English. ' We will loaf,' he said, ' we will be always loafers.' He meant, of course, to assert that we should love and be always lovers, but the intricacies of our pronunciation were too much for him. I could have died, it was so amusing. I managed, however, to keep a straight face. ' Marquis,' I said, ' I am deeply honoured, but your invitation is one that I am unable to accept.' A more astounded man you never saw. He really thought that he had but to ask, and it would be given. He declined to take No for an answer. He said he would wait. Actually, he was so pertinacious that I had to drag Fanny up to Paris. He followed us in the next train. There was no getting rid of him at all. If he sent me one note he sent me a hundred, and notes ten pages each, at the very least. Finally, as you heard, he

tried the dramatic. One afternoon, while I was out shopping, he bribed a waiter at the hotel where we lodged. When I returned, there he was, waiting for me. 'At last,' he cried, 'at last we are face to face. You think I do not love. Cruel one, behold me! I love as no mortal ever loved before. See, I die at your feet!' And there, before my very eyes, he whipped out a pistol, pulled the trigger, tumbled over, and seemed fully disposed to carry out the programme to the end. He had shot himself; there was no doubt about that; but he had shot himself in such an intelligent manner that, though there was blood enough to frighten a sensitive young person out of her wits, yet of danger there was none at all. Talk to me about comedians! . . .

"It was after that episode that I returned to Beacon Street. It was there that what you are pleased to call the scandal began. Fanny, whose desire to marry me off was simply epic, one day caught an Englishman; young, so she said, and good-looking. And that Englishman, she made up her mind, I should ensnare. Fanny, as you know, was possessed with an ungratified desire to pay annual visits to swell country houses on the other side. Hence, I suppose, her efforts. Having caught the Englishman, the next step was to serve him up in becoming form. To that end she gave a tentative dinner. I got to it late; in fact, I was the last to arrive. Fanny, I could see, was in a state of feverish excitement. She presented to me one or two men, whose names I did not catch, and a moment later one of them gave me his arm. When we were seated at table, and while he was sticking a chrysanthemum in his button-hole, I glanced at the card on his plate. It bore for legend Lord Alfred Harrow. It was then I took my first look at him. My dear, he was the ugliest man I have ever seen; he was so ugly that he was positively attractive. His mouth was large enough to sing a duet, but his teeth were whiter than mine."

As she spoke she curled her lips.

"There was no hair on his face, and his features were those of a middle-aged wizard. But about him was the atmosphere of health, of strength, too, and his hands, though bronzed and sinewy, were perfect. I knew he was a thoroughbred at once. 'And how do you like the States?' I asked. He was squeezing some lemon on an oyster, and I noticed that when some white wine was offered him he turned the glass upside down. 'Very much,' he answered; 'and you?' There was more of that sort of thing, and finally I asked him if, like other Englishmen, he thought that Boston suggested one of his provincial towns. 'There seems to be some mistake,' he said. 'I was going into the Somerset five minutes ago when Hill corralled me. He told me that his wife was giving a dinner, and that at the last moment one of the bidden had wired to the effect that he was prevented from coming. Whereupon Mrs. Hill had packed him off to the club, with instructions to bring back the first man he met.

I happened to be that man.' He took up the card. 'Lord Alfred is, I fancy, the delinquent. My name,' he added, 'is Mr. Stitt—Ferris Stitt,' he continued, as though apologising for its inconsequence.

"After that we got on famously. In a day or two he came to the house. When he left the world was larger. He knew nothing about poetry. He had never so much as heard of Fichte. Herbert Spencer was to him a name and nothing more. The only works of ornamental literature which he seemed to have read were the Arabian Nights, which he had forgotten, and something of Dickens, which had put him to sleep. He did not know one note of music from another. But he had hunted big game in Africa, in Bengal, and he had penetrated Tibet. He had been in Iceland and among the Caribs. No carpet-knight was he.

"My dear, I had not seen him five times before I felt myself going. I think he knew it. But I had been cheated before, and so well that I held on with all my strength. While I was holding on, he disappeared. Not a word, not a line, not even so much as a p.p.c. In the course of time, through the merest accident, I learned that he was in Yucatan. Six months later I caught a glimpse of him in the street. Presently he called.

"At once, without so much as a preamble, he told me he had gone away that in absence he might learn whether I was as dear to him as he thought. He hesitated a moment. 'Will you let me love you?' he asked. 'You have been prudent,' I answered; 'let me be prudent too.' Then I told him of my disenchantments. I told him how difficult I found it to discover what men really were. I told him, as I have told you, that it seemed to me, if an intelligent girl admired her brother, it was because that brother was assuredly an admirable man. And I added that I would accept no man until I had the same opportunities of judging him as a sister has of judging her brother. Besides, I said, I have yet to know what love may be. It was then that we made the agreement of which you disapprove. After all, it was my own suggestion, and, if unconventional, in what does the criterion consist? I was acting for the best. You do not imagine, do you, that I regret it?"

And to her lips came a smile.

"I took Mary, who, you must admit, is respectability personified, and whom I had long since elevated from nurse to sheep-dog—I took Mary, and, together, all three of us, we went abroad. It is in travelling that you get to know a man. Each evening, when he said good-night, my admiration had increased. From England, as you know, we went straight to India. It was a long trip, I had heard, but to me it seemed needlessly brief. During the entire journey I studied him as one studies a new science. I watched him as a cat watches a mouse. Not once did he do the slightest thing that jarred. During the entire journey he did not so much as attempt to take my

hand in his. He knew, I suppose, as I knew, that if the time ever came I would give it unasked.

One evening, on going to my stateroom, I found I had left my vinaigrette on deck. Mary was asleep. I went back for it alone. It was very dark. On the way to where I had sat I heard his voice ; he was talking to one of the passengers. In spite of myself I listened to what he was saying. I listened for nearly an hour. Not one word was there in it all that he could not have said to me. When I got back to my cabin I wondered whether it might not be that he knew I was standing there. Yes, I admit, I was suspicious ; but circumstances had made me so. Oh, he has forgiven me since."

She smiled again complacently to herself, and, tucking the whip under her arm, she drew off a glove. On one finger was a narrow circle of gold. She looked at it and raised it to her lips.

" When we landed our journey had practically begun. You see, I was still unassured. Yet he was irreproachable and ever the same. Well, the details are unimportant. One day, at Benares, he heard that leopards had been seen in the neighbourhood of a lake some fifteen or twenty miles out. At once he was for having a crack at them. I determined to accompany him. He was surprised at first, and objected a little, but I managed, as I usually do, to have my own way. It was night when we got there. We left the horses with the guide, and, noiselessly as ghosts, we stole through a coppice which hid the lake from view. Almost at the water's edge we crouched and waited. The stars were white as lilies and splendid as trembling gems. The silence was as absolute as night. How long we waited I cannot now recall. I think I dreamed a bit with open eyes. Then dimly I became conscious of something moving in the distance. The moon had risen like a balloon of gold, and in the air was the scent of sandal. Slowly, with an indolent grace of its own, that something neared the opposite shore. As it reached the water it stopped, arched its back, and turned. I saw then that it was a leopard. No, my dear, you can form no idea of the beauty of that beast. And then, suddenly, it threw its head back and called. It lapped the water, and then with its tongue gave its forepaw one long, lustrous lick, and called again ; a call that was echoless, yet so resonant I felt it thrill my finger-tips. In a moment its mate sprang from the shadows. If the first-comer was beautiful, then this one was the ideal. There they stood, caressing each other with amber, insatiate eyes. It was like a scene in fairyland. And as I watched them I felt a movement at my side. I turned. He had taken aim and was about to fire, but, as I turned, he turned to me. Those beasts, I told myself, are far too fair for death ; yet I said not a word. My dear, he read my unuttered wish, he lowered the gun, and then—then, for the first time, I knew what love might be. . . . There's the dog-cart now. Come over and dine to-morrow. If you care to, Ferris will show you the gun."

HENRY HARLAND
1861–1905

A BROKEN LOOKING-GLASS

He climbed the three flights of stone stairs, and put his key into the lock; but before he turned it, he stopped—to rest, to take breath. On the door his name was painted in big white letters, Mr. Richard Dane. It is always silent in the Temple at midnight; to-night the silence was dense, like a fog. It was Sunday night; and on Sunday night, even within the hushed precincts of the Temple one is conscious of a deeper hush.

When he had lighted the lamp in his sitting-room, he let himself drop into an armchair before the empty fireplace. He was tired, he was exhausted. Yet nothing had happened to tire him. He had dined, as he always dined on Sundays, with the Rodericks, in Cheyne Walk; he had driven home in a hansom. There was no reason why he should be tired. But he was tired. A deadly lassitude penetrated his body and his spirit like a fluid. He was too tired to go to bed.

"I suppose I am getting old," he thought.

To a second person the matter would have appeared not one of supposition but of certainty, not of progression but of accomplishment. Getting old indeed? But he *was* old. It was an old man, grey and wrinkled and wasted, who sat there, limp, sunken upon himself, in his easy-chair. In years, to be sure, he was under sixty; but he looked like a man of seventy-five.

"I am getting old, I suppose, I am getting old."

And vaguely, dully, he contemplated his life, spread out behind him like a misty landscape, and thought what a failure it had been. What had it come to? What had it brought him? What had he done or won?

Nothing, nothing. It had brought him nothing but old age, solitude, disappointment, and, to-night especially, a sense of fatigue and apathy that weighed upon him like a suffocating blanket. On a table, a yard or two away, stood a decanter of whisky, with some soda-water bottles and tumblers; he looked at it with heavy eyes, and he knew that there was what he needed. A little whisky would strengthen him, revive him, and make it possible for him to bestir himself and undress and go to bed. But when he thought of rising and moving to pour the whisky out, he shrank from that effort as from an Herculean labour; no—he was too tired. Then his mind

went back to the friends he had left in Chelsea half an hour ago ; it seemed an indefinably long time ago, years and years ago ; they were like blurred phantoms, dimly remembered from a remote past.

Yes, his life had been a failure ; total, miserable, abject. It had come to nothing ; its harvest was a harvest of ashes. If it had been a useful life, he could have accepted its unhappiness ; if it had been a happy life, he could have forgotten its uselessness ; but it had been both useless and unhappy. He had done nothing for others, he had won nothing for himself. Oh, but he had tried, he had tried. When he had left Oxford people expected great things of him ; he had expected great things of himself. He was admitted to be clever, to be gifted ; he was ambitious, he was in earnest. He wished to make a name, he wished to justify his existence by fruitful work. And he had worked hard. He had put all his knowledge, all his talent, all his energy, into his work ; he had not spared himself ; he had passed laborious days and studious nights. And what remained to show for it ? Three or four volumes upon Political Economy, that had been read in their day a little, discussed a little, and then quite forgotten—superseded by the books of newer men. " Pulped, pulped," he reflected bitterly. Except for a stray dozen of copies scattered here and there—in the British Museum, in his College library, on his own bookshelves—his published writings had by this time (he could not doubt) met with the common fate of unappreciated literature, and been " pulped."

" Pulped—pulped ; pulped—pulped." The hateful word beat rhythmically again and again in his tired brain ; and for a little while that was all he was conscious of.

So much for the work of his life. And for the rest ? The play ? The living ? Oh, he had nothing to recall but failure. It had sufficed that he should desire a thing, for him to miss it ; that he should set his heart upon a thing, for it to be removed beyond the sphere of his possible acquisition. It had been so from the beginning ; it had been so always. He sat motionless as a stone, and allowed his thoughts to drift listlessly hither and thither in the current of memory. Everywhere they encountered wreckage, derelicts ; defeated aspirations, broken hopes. Languidly he envisaged these. He was too tired to resent, to rebel. He even found a certain sluggish satisfaction in recognising with what unvarying harshness destiny had treated him, in resigning himself to the unmerited.

He caught sight of his hand, lying flat and inert upon the brown leather arm of his chair. His eyes rested on it, and for the moment he forgot everything else in a sort of torpid study of it. How white it was, how thin, how withered ; the nails were parched into minute corrugations ; the veins stood out like dark wires ; the skin hung loosely on it, and had a dry lustre ; an old man's hand. He gazed at it fixedly, till his eyes closed and his head fell forward. But he was not sleepy, he was only tired and weak.

He raised his head with a start and changed his position. He felt cold; but to endure the cold was easier than to get up and put something on, or go to bed.

How silent the world was; how empty his room. An immense feeling of solitude, of isolation, fell upon him. He was quite cut off from the rest of humanity here. If anything should happen to him, if he should need help of any sort, what could he do? Call out? But who would hear? At nine in the morning the porter's wife would come with his tea. But if anything should happen to him in the meantime? There would be nothing for it but to wait till nine o'clock.

Ah, if he had married, if he had had children, a wife, a home of his own, instead of these desolate bachelor chambers!

If he had married, indeed! It was his sorrow's crown of sorrow that he had not married, that he had not been able to marry, that the girl he had wished to marry wouldn't have him. Failure? Success? He could have accounted failure in other things a trifle, he could have laughed at what the world calls failure, if Elinor Lynd had been his wife. But that was the heart of his misfortune, she wouldn't have him.

He had met her for the first time when he was a lad of twenty, and she a girl of eighteen. He could see her palpable before him now: her slender girlish figure, her bright eyes, her laughing mouth, her warm brown hair curling round her forehead. Oh, how he had loved her! For twelve years he had waited upon her, wooed her, hoped to win her. But she had always said, "No—I don't love you. I am very fond of you; I love you as a friend; we all love you that way—my mother, my father, my sisters. But I can't marry you." However, she married no one else, she loved no one else: and for twelve years he was an ever-welcome guest in her father's house; and she would talk with him, play to him, pity him; and he could hope. Then she died. He called one day, and they said she was ill. After that there came a blank in his memory—a gulf, full of blackness and redness, anguish and confusion; and then a sort of dreadful sudden calm, when they told him she was dead.

He remembered standing in her room, after the funeral, with her father, her mother, her sister Elizabeth. He remembered the pale daylight that filled it, and how orderly and cold and forsaken it all looked. And there was her bed, the bed she had died in; and there her dressing-table, with her combs and brushes; and there her writing-desk, her book-case. He remembered a row of medicine bottles on the mantelpiece; he remembered the fierce anger, the hatred of them, as if they were animate, that had welled up in his heart as he looked at them, because they had failed to do their work.

"You will wish to have something that was hers, Richard," her mother said. "What would you like?"

On her dressing-table there was a small looking-glass, in an ivory frame. He asked if he might have that, and carried it away with him. She had looked into it a thousand times, no doubt; she had

done her hair in it ; it had reflected her, enclosed her, contained her. He could almost persuade himself that something of her must remain in it. To own it was like owning something of herself. He carried it home with him, hugging it to his side with a kind of passion.

He had prized it, he prized it still, as his dearest treasure ; the looking-glass in which her face had been reflected a thousand times ; the glass that had contained her, known her ; in which something of herself, he felt, must linger. To handle it, look at it, into it, behind it, was like holding a mystic communion with her ; it gave him an emotion that was infinitely sweet and bitter, a pain that was dissolved in joy.

The glass lay now, folded in its ivory case, on the chimney-shelf in front of him. That was its place ; he always kept it on his chimney-shelf, so that he could see it whenever he glanced round the room. He leaned back in his chair and looked at it ; for a long time his eyes remained fixed upon it. " If she had married me, she wouldn't have died. My love, my care, would have healed her. She could not have died." Monotonously, automatically, the phrase repeated itself over and over again in his mind, while his eyes remained fixed on the ivory case into which her looking-glass was folded. It was an effect of his fatigue, no doubt, that his eyes, once directed upon an object, were slow to leave it for another ; that a phrase once pronounced in his thought had this tendency to repeat itself over and over again.

But at last he roused himself a little, and leaning forward, put his hand out and up, to take the glass from the shelf. He wished to hold it, to touch it and look into it. As he lifted it towards him it fell open, the mirror proper being fastened to a leather back, which was glued to the ivory, and formed a hinge. It fell open ; and his grasp had been insecure ; and the jerk as it opened was enough. It slipped from his fingers, and dropped with a crash upon the hearthstone

The sound went through him like a physical pain. He sank back in his chair and closed his eyes. His heart was beating as after a mighty physical exertion. He knew vaguely that a calamity had befallen him ; he could vaguely imagine the splinters of shattered glass at his feet. But his physical prostration was so great as to obliterate, to neutralise, emotion. He felt very cold. He felt that he was being hurried along with terrible speed through darkness and cold air. There was the continuous roar of rapid motion in his ears, a faint, dizzy bewilderment in his head. He felt that he was trying to catch hold of things, to stop his progress, but his hands closed upon emptiness ; that he was trying to call out for help, but he could make no sound. On—on—on, he was being whirled through some immeasurable abyss of space.

. . . . . .

" Ah, yes, he's dead, quite dead," the doctor said. " He has been dead some hours. He must have passed away peacefully, sitting here in his chair."

" Poor gentleman," said the porter's wife. " And a broken looking-glass beside him. Oh, it's a sure sign, a broken looking-glass."

MARY E. WILKINS FREEMAN
1862–1930

A FAR-AWAY MELODY

THE clothes-line was wound securely around the trunks of four gnarled, crooked old apple-trees, which stood promiscuously about the yard back of the cottage. It was tree-blossoming time, but these were too aged and sapless to blossom freely, and there was only a white bough here and there shaking itself triumphantly from among the rest, which had only their new green leaves. There was a branch occasionally which had not even these, but pierced the tender green and the flossy white in hard grey nakedness. All over the yard, the grass was young and green and short, and had not yet gotten any feathery heads. Once in a while there was a dandelion set closely down among it.

The cottage was low, of a dark-red colour, with white facings around the windows, which had no blinds, only green paper curtains.

The back door was in the centre of the house, and opened directly into the green yard, with hardly a pretence of a step, only a flat oval stone before it.

Through this door, stepping cautiously on the stone, came presently two tall, lank women in chocolate-coloured calico gowns, with a basket of clothes between them. They set the basket underneath the line on the grass, with a little clothes-pin bag beside it, and then proceeded methodically to hang out the clothes. Everything of a kind went together, and the best things on the outside line, which could be seen from the street in front of the cottage.

The two women were curiously alike. They were about the same height, and moved in the same way. Even their faces were so similar in feature and expression that it might have been a difficult matter to distinguish between them. All the difference, and that would have been scarcely apparent to an ordinary observer, was a difference of degree, if it might be so expressed. In one face the features were both bolder and sharper in outline, the eyes were a trifle larger and brighter, and the whole expression more animated and decided than in the other.

One woman's scanty drab hair was a shade darker than the other's, and the negative fairness of complexion, which generally accompanies drab hair, was in one relieved by a slight tinge of warm red on the cheeks. This slightly intensified woman had been commonly considered the more attractive of the two, although in reality there

was very little to choose between the personal appearance of these twin sisters, Priscilla and Mary Brown. They moved about the clothes-line, pinning the sweet white linen on securely, their thick, white-stockinged ankles showing beneath their limp calicoes as they stepped, and their large feet in cloth slippers flattening down the short green grass. Their sleeves were rolled up, displaying their long, thin, muscular arms, which were sharply pointed at the elbows.

They were homely women; they were fifty and over now, but they never could have been pretty in their 'teens, their features were too irredeemably irregular for that. No youthful freshness of complexion or expression could have possibly done away with the impression that they gave. Their plainness had probably only been enhanced by the contrast, and these women, to people generally, seemed better-looking than when they were young. There was an honesty and patience in both faces that showed all the plainer for their homeliness.

One, the sister with the darker hair, moved a little quicker than the other, and lifted the wet clothes from the basket to the line more frequently. She was the first to speak, too, after they had been hanging out the clothes for some little time in silence. She stopped as she did so, with a wet pillow-case in her hand, and looked up reflectively at the flowering apple-boughs overhead, and the blue sky showing between, while the sweet spring wind ruffled her scanty hair a little.

"I wonder, Mary," said she, "if it would seem so very queer to die a mornin' like this, say. Don't you believe there's apple branches a-hangin' over them walls made out of precious stones, like these, only there ain't any dead limbs among 'em, an' they're all covered thick with flowers? An' I wonder if it would seem such an awful change to go from this air into the air of the New Jerusalem." Just then a robin hidden somewhere in the trees began to sing. "I s'pose," she went on, "that there's angels instead of robins, though, and they don't roost up in trees to sing, but stand on the ground, with lilies growin' round their feet, may be, up to their knees, or on the gold stones in the street, an' play on their harps to go with the singin'."

The other sister gave a scared, awed look at her. "Lor, don't talk that way, sister," said she. "What has got into you lately? You make me crawl all over, talkin' so much about dyin'. You feel well, don't you?"

"Lor, yes," replied the other, laughing, and picking up a clothes-pin for her pillow-case; "I feel well enough, an' I don't know what has got me to talkin' so much about dyin' lately, or thinkin' about it. I guess it's the spring weather. P'r'aps flowers growin' make anybody think of wings sproutin' kinder naterally. I won't talk so much about it if it bothers you, an' I don't know but it's sorter nateral it should. Did you get the potatoes before we came out,

sister ? "—with an awkward and kindly effort to change the subject.

" No," replied the other, stooping over the clothes-basket. There was such a film of tears in her dull blue eyes that she could not distinguish one article from another.

" Well, I guess you had better go in an' get 'em, then ; they ain't worth anything, this time of year, unless they soak a while, an' I'll finish hangin' out the clothes while you do it."

" Well, p'r'aps I'd better," the other woman replied, straightening herself up from the clothes-basket. Then she went into the house without another word ; but down in the damp cellar, a minute later, she sobbed over the potato barrel as if her heart would break. Her sister's remarks had filled her with a vague apprehension and grief which she could not throw off. And there was something a little singular about it. Both these women had always been of a deeply religious cast of mind. They had studied the Bible faithfully, if not understandingly, and their religion had strongly tinctured their daily life. They knew almost as much about the Old Testament prophets as they did about their neighbours ; and that was saying a good deal of two single women in a New England country town. Still this religious element in their natures could hardly have been termed spirituality. It deviated from that as much as anything of religion—which is in one way spirituality itself—could.

Both sisters were eminently practical in all affairs of life, down to their very dreams, and Priscilla especially so. She had dealt in religion with bare facts of sin and repentance, future punishment and reward. She had dwelt very little, probably, upon the poetic splendours of the Eternal City, and talked about them still less. Indeed, she had always been reticent about her religious convictions, and had said very little about them even to her sister.

The two women, with God in their thoughts every moment, seldom had spoken His name to each other. For Priscilla to talk in the strain that she had to-day, and for a week or two previous, off and on, was, from its extreme deviation from her usual custom, certainly startling.

Poor Mary, sobbing over the potato barrel, thought it was a sign of approaching death. She had a few superstitious-like grafts upon her practical, commonplace character.

She wiped her eyes finally, and went upstairs with her tin basin of potatoes, which were carefully washed and put to soak by the time her sister came in with the empty basket.

At twelve exactly the two sat down to dinner in the clean kitchen, which was one of the two rooms the cottage boasted. The narrow entry ran from the front door to the back. On one side was the kitchen and living-room ; on the other, the room where the sisters slept. There were two small unfurnished lofts overhead, reached by a step-ladder through a little scuttle in the entry ceiling : and that was all. The sisters had earned the cottage and paid for it

years before, by working as tailoresses. They had, besides, quite a snug little sum in the bank, which they had saved out of their hard earnings. There was no need for Priscilla and Mary to work so hard, people said ; but work hard they did, and work hard they would as long as they lived. The mere habit of work had become as necessary to them as breathing.

Just as soon as they had finished their meal and cleared away the dishes, they put on some clean starched purple prints, which were their afternoon dresses, and seated themselves with their work at the two front windows ; the house faced south-west, so the sunlight streamed through both. It was a very warm day for the season, and the windows were open. Close to them in the yard outside stood great clumps of lilac bushes. They grew on the other side of the front door too ; a little later the low cottage would look half buried in them. The shadows of their leaves made a dancing network over the freshly washed yellow floor.

The two sisters sat there and sewed on some coarse vests all the afternoon. Neither made a remark often. The room, with its glossy little cooking-stove, its eight-day clock on the mantel, its chintz-cushioned rocking-chairs, and the dancing shadows of the lilac leaves on its yellow floor, looked pleasant and peaceful.

Just before six o'clock a neighbour dropped in with her cream pitcher to borrow some milk for tea, and she sat down for a minute's chat after she had got it filled. They had been talking a few moments on neighbourhood topics, when all of a sudden Priscilla ler her work fall and raised her hand. " Hush ! " whispered she.

The other two stopped talking, and listened, staring at her wonderingly, but they could hear nothing. " What is it, Miss Priscilla ? " asked the neighbour, with round blue eyes. She was a pretty young thing, who had not been married long.

" Hush ! Don't speak. Don't you hear that beautiful music ? " Her ear was inclined towards the open window, her hand still raised warningly, and her eyes fixed on the opposite wall beyond them. Mary turned visibly paler than her usual dull paleness, and shuddered. " I don't hear any music," she said. " Do you, Miss Moore ? "

" No-o," replied the caller, her simple little face beginning to put on a scared look, from a vague sense of a mystery she could not fathom. Mary Brown rose and went to the door, and looked eagerly up and down the street. " There ain't no organ-man in sight anywhere," said she, returning, " an' I can't hear any music, an' Miss Moore can't, an' we're both sharp enough o' hearin'. You're jest imaginin' it, sister."

" I never imagined anything in my life," returned the other, " an' it ain't likely I'm goin' to begin now. It's the beautifulest music. It comes from over the orchard there. Can't you hear it ? But it seems to me it's growin' a little fainter like now. "I guess it's movin' off, perhaps."

Mary Brown set her lips hard. The grief and anxiety she had felt

lately turned suddenly to unreasoning anger against the cause of it; through her very love she fired with quick wrath at the beloved object. Still she did not say much, only, "I guess it must be movin' off," with a laugh, which had an unpleasant ring in it.

After the neighbour had gone, however, she said more, standing before her sister with her arms folded squarely across her bosom. "Now, Priscilla Brown," she exclaimed, "I think it's about time to put a stop to this. I've heard about enough of it. What do you s'pose Miss Moore thought of you? Next thing it'll be all over town that you're gettin' spiritual notions. To-day it's music that nobody else can hear, an' yesterday you smelled roses, and there ain't one in blossom this time o' year, and all the time you're talkin' about dyin'. For my part, I don't see why you ain't as likely to live as I am. You're uncommon hearty on vittles. You ate a pretty good dinner to-day for a dyin' person."

"I didn't say I was goin' to die," replied Priscilla meekly: the two sisters seemed suddenly to have changed natures. "An' I'll try not to talk so, if it plagues you. I told you I wouldn't this mornin', but the music kinder took me by surprise like, an' I thought may be you an' Miss Moore could hear it. I can jest hear it a little bit now, like the dyin' away of a bell."

"There you go agin!" cried the other sharply. "Do, for mercy's sake, stop, Priscilla. There ain't no music."

"Well, I won't talk any more about it," she answered patiently; and she rose and began setting the table for tea, while Mary sat down and resumed her sewing, drawing the thread through the cloth with quick, uneven jerks. That night the pretty girl neighbour was aroused from her first sleep by a distressed voice at her bedroom window, crying, "Miss Moore! Miss Moore!"

She spoke to her husband, who opened the window. "What's wanted?" he asked, peering out into the darkness.

"Priscilla's sick," moaned the distressed voice; "awful sick. She's fainted, an' I can't bring her to. Go for the doctor—quick! quick! *quick!*" The voice ended in a shriek on the last word, and the speaker turned and ran back to the cottage, where, on the bed, lay a pale, gaunt woman, who had not stirred since she left it. Immovable through all her sister's agony, she lay there, her features shaping themselves out more and more from the shadows, the bedclothes that covered her limbs taking on an awful rigidity.

"She must have died in her sleep," the doctor said, when he came, "without a struggle." When Mary Brown really understood that her sister was dead, she left her to the kindly ministrations of the good women who are always ready at such times in a country place, and went and sat by the kitchen window in the chair which her sister had occupied that afternoon.

There the women found her when the last offices had been done for the dead. "Come home with me to-night," one said; "Miss

Green will stay with *her*," with a turn of her head towards the opposite room, and an emphasis on the pronoun which distinguished it at once from one applied to a living person.

" No," said Mary Brown ; " I'm a-goin' to set here an' listen." She had the window wide open, leaning her head out into the chilly night air. The women looked at each other ; one tapped her head, another nodded hers. " Poor thing ! " said a third.

" You see," went on Mary Brown, still speaking with her head leaned out of the window, " I was cross with her this afternoon because she talked about hearin' music. I was cross, an' spoke up sharp to her, because I loved her, but I don't think she knew. I didn't want to think she was goin' to die, but she was. An' she heard the music. It was true. An' now I'm a-goin' to set here an' listen till I hear it too, an' then I'll know she ain't laid up what I said agin me, an' that I'm a-goin' to die too."

They found it impossible to reason with her ; there she sat till morning, with a pitying woman beside her, listening all in vain for unearthly melody.

Next day they sent for a widowed niece of the sisters, who came at once, bringing her little boy with her. She was a kindly young woman, and took up her abode in the little cottage, and did the best she could for her poor aunt, who, it soon became evident, would never be quite herself again. There she would sit at the kitchen window and listen day by day. She took a great fancy to her niece's little boy, and used often to hold him in her lap as she sat there. Once in a while she would ask him if he heard any music. " An innocent little thing like him might hear quicker than a hard, unbelievin' old woman like me," she told his mother once.

She lived so for nearly a year after her sister died. It was evident that she failed gradually and surely, though there was no apparent disease. It seemed to trouble her exceedingly that she never heard the music she listened for. She had an idea that she could not die unless she did, and her whole soul seemed filled with longing to join her beloved twin sister, and be assured of her forgiveness. This sister-love was all she had ever felt, besides her love of God, in any strong degree ; all the passion of devotion of which this homely, commonplace woman was capable was centred in that, and the unsatisfied strength of it was killing her. The weaker she grew, the more earnestly she listened. She was too feeble to sit up, but she would not consent to lie in bed, and made them bolster her up with pillows in a rocking-chair by the window. At last she died, in the spring, a week or two before her sister had the preceding year. The season was a little more advanced this year, and the appletrees were blossomed out further than they were then. She died about ten o'clock in the morning. The day before her neice had been called into the room by a shrill cry of rapture from her : " I've heard it ! I've heard it ! " she cried. "A faint sound o' music, like the dyin' away of a bell."

EDITH WHARTON

B. 1862

THE MOVING FINGER

I

THE news of Mrs. Grancy's death came to me with the shock of an immense blunder—one of fate's most irretrievable acts of vandalism. It was as though all sorts of renovating forces had been checked by the clogging of that one wheel. Not that Mrs. Grancy contributed any perceptible momentum to the social machine: her unique distinction was that of filling to perfection her special place in the world. So many people are like badly composed statues, overlapping their niches at one point and leaving them vacant at another. Mrs. Grancy's niche was her husband's life; and if it be argued that the space was not large enough for its vacancy to leave a very big gap, I can only say that, at the last resort, such dimensions must be determined by finer instruments than any ready-made standard of utility. Ralph Grancy's was, in short, a kind of disembodied usefulness: one of those constructive influences that, instead of crystallising into definite forms, remain as it were a medium for the development of clear thinking and fine feeling. He faithfully irrigated his own dusty patch of life, and the fruitful moisture stole far beyond his boundaries. If, to carry on the metaphor, Grancy's life was a sedulously cultivated enclosure, his wife was the flower he had planted in its midst—the embowering tree, rather, which gave him rest and shade at its foot and the wind of dreams in its upper branches.

We had all—his small but devoted band of followers—known a moment when it seemed likely that Grancy would fail us. We had watched him pitted against one stupid obstacle after another—ill-health, poverty, misunderstanding, and, worst of all for a man of his texture, his first wife's soft insidious egotism. We had seen him sinking under the leaden embrace of her affection like a swimmer in a drowning clutch; but just as we despaired he had always come to the surface again, blinded, panting, but striking out fiercely for the shore. When at last her death released him it became a question as to how much of the man she had carried with her. Left alone, he revealed numb withered patches, like a tree from which a parasite has been stripped. But gradually he began to put out new leaves; and when he met the lady who was to become his

second wife—his one *real* wife, as his friends reckoned—the whole man burst into flower.

The second Mrs. Grancy was past thirty when he married her, and it was clear that she had harvested that crop of middle joy which is rooted in young despair. But if she had lost the surface of eighteen she had kept its inner light ; if her cheek lacked the gloss of immaturity her eyes were young with the stored youth of half a lifetime. Grancy had first known her somewhere in the East—I believe she was the sister of one of our consuls out there—and when he brought her home to New York she came among us as a stranger. The idea of Grancy's remarriage had been a shock to us all. After one such calcining most men would have kept out of the fire ; but we agreed that he was predestined to sentimental blunders, and we awaited with resignation the embodiment of his latest mistake. Then Mrs. Grancy came—and we understood. She was the most beautiful and the most complete of explanations. We shuffled our defeated omniscience out of sight, and gave it hasty burial under a prodigality of welcome. For the first time in years we had Grancy off our minds. " He'll do something great now ! " the least sanguine of us prophesied ; and our sentimentalist emended : " He *has* done it—in marrying her ! "

It was Claydon, the portrait-painter, who risked this hyperbole ; and who soon, afterward, at the happy husband's request, prepared to defend it in a portrait of Mrs. Grancy. We were all—even Claydon—ready to concede that Mrs. Grancy's unwontedness was in some degree a matter of environment. Her graces were complementary, and it needed the mate's call to reveal the flash of colour beneath her neutral-tinted wings. But if she needed Grancy to interpret her, how much greater was the service she rendered him ! Claydon professionally described her as the right frame for him ; but if she defined she also enlarged, if she threw the whole into perspective she also cleared new ground, opened fresh vistas, reclaimed whole areas of activity that had run to waste under the harsh husbandry of privation. This interaction of sympathies was not without its visible expression. Claydon was not alone in maintaining that Grancy's presence—or indeed the mere mention of his name—had a perceptible effect on his wife's appearance. It was as though a light were shifted, a curtain drawn back, as though, to borrow another of Claydon's metaphors, Love the indefatigable artist were perpetually seeking a happier " pose " for his model. In this interpretative light Mrs. Grancy acquired the charm which makes some women's faces like a book of which the last page is never turned. There was always something new to read in her eyes. What Claydon read there—or at least such scattered hints of the ritual as reached him through the sanctuary doors—his portrait in due course declared to us. When the picture was exhibited it was at once acclaimed as his masterpiece ; but

the people who knew Mrs. Grancy smiled and said it was flattered. Claydon, however, had not set out to paint *their* Mrs. Grancy—or ours even—but Ralph's; and Ralph knew his own at a glance. At the first confrontation he saw that Claydon had understood. As for Mrs. Grancy, when the finished picture was shown to her, she turned to the painter and said simply: "Ah, you've done me facing the east!"

The picture, then, for all its value, seemed a mere incident in the unfolding of their double destiny, a footnote to the illuminated text of their lives. It was not till afterward that it acquired the significance of last words spoken on a threshold never to be recrossed. Grancy, a year after his marriage, had given up his town house and carried his bliss an hour's journey away, to a little place among the hills. His various duties and interests brought him frequently to New York, but we necessarily saw him less often than when his house had served as the rallying-point of kindred enthusiasms. It seemed a pity that such an influence should be withdrawn, but we all felt that his long arrears of happiness should be paid in whatever coin he chose. The distance from which the fortunate couple radiated warmth on us was not too great for friendship to traverse; and our conception of a glorified leisure took the form of Sundays spent in the Grancys' library, with its sedative rural outlook, and the portrait of Mrs. Grancy illuminating its studious walls. The picture was at its best in that setting; and we used to accuse Claydon of visiting Mrs. Grancy in order to see her portrait. He met this by declaring that the portrait *was* Mrs. Grancy; and there were moments when the statement seemed unanswerable. One of us, indeed—I think it must have been the novelist—said that Claydon had been saved from falling in love with Mrs. Grancy only by falling in love with his picture of her; and it was noticeable that he, to whom his finished work was no more than the shed husk of future effort, showed a perennial tenderness for this one achievement. We smiled afterward to think how often, when Mrs. Grancy was in the room, her presence reflecting itself in our talk like a gleam of sky in the hurrying current, Claydon, averted from the real woman, would sit as it were listening to the picture. His attitude, at the time, seemed only a part of the unusualness of those picturesque afternoons, when the most familiar combinations of life underwent a magical change. Some human happiness is a land-locked lake; but the Grancys' was an open sea, stretching a buoyant and illimitable surface to the voyaging interests of life. There was room and to spare on those waters for all our separate ventures; and always, beyond the sunset, a mirage of the fortunate isles towards which our prows were bent.

II

It was in Rome that, three years later, I heard of her death. The

notice said " suddenly." I was glad of that. I was glad too—basely perhaps—to be away from Grancy at a time when silence must have seemed obtuse and speech derisive.

I was still in Rome when, a few months afterward, he suddenly arrived there. He had been appointed Secretary of Legation at Constantinople, and was on the way to his post. He had taken the place, he said frankly, " to get away." Our relations with the Porte held out a prospect of hard work, and that, he explained, was what he needed. He could never be satisfied to sit down among the ruins. I saw that, like most of us in moment of extreme moral tension, he was playing a part, behaving as he thought it became a man to behave in the eye of disaster. The instinctive posture of grief is a shuffling compromise between defiance and prostration ; and pride feels the need of striking a worthier attitude in face of such a foe. Grancy, by nature musing and retrospective, had chosen the rôle of the man of action, who answers blow for blow and opposes a mailed front to the thrusts of destiny ; and the completeness of the equipment testified to his inner weakness. We talked only of what we were not thinking of, and parted, after a few days, with a sense of relief that proved the inadequacy of friendship to perform, in such cases, the office assigned to it by tradition.

Soon afterward my own work called me home, but Grancy remained several years in Europe. International diplomacy kept its promise of giving him work to do, and during the year in which he acted as *chargé d'affaires* he acquitted himself, under trying conditions, with conspicuous zeal and discretion. A political redistribution of matter removed him from office just as he had proved his usefulness to the Government ; and the following summer I heard that he had come home and was down at his place in the country.

On my return to town I wrote him, and his reply came by the next post. He answered as it were in his natural voice, urging me to spend the following Sunday with him, and suggesting that I should bring down any of the old set who could be persuaded to join me. I thought this a good sign, and yet—shall I own it ?—I was vaguely disappointed. Perhaps we are apt to feel that our friends' sorrows should be kept like those historic monuments from which the encroaching ivy is periodically removed.

That very evening at the club I ran across Claydon. I told him of Grancy's invitation, and proposed that we should go down together ; but he pleaded an engagement. I was sorry, for I had always felt that he and I stood nearer Ralph than the others, and if the old Sundays were to be renewed, I should have preferred that we two should spend the first alone with him. I said as much to Claydon, and offered to fit my time to his ; but he met this by a general refusal.

" I don't want to go to Grancy's," he said bluntly. I waited a

moment, but he appended no qualifying clause.

"You've seen him since he came back?" I finally ventured.

Claydon nodded.

"And he is so awfully bad?"

"Bad? No; he's all right."

"All right? How can he be, unless he's changed beyond all recognition?"

"Oh, you'll recognise *him*," said Claydon, with a puzzling deflection of emphasis.

His ambiguity was beginning to exasperate me, and I felt myself shut out from some knowledge to which I had as good a right as he.

"You've been down there already, I suppose?"

"Yes; I've been down there."

"And you've done with each other—the partnership is dissolved?"

"Done with each other? I wish to God we had!" He rose nervously and tossed aside the review from which my approach had diverted him. "Look here," he said, standing before me, "Ralph's the best fellow going, and there's nothing under Heaven I wouldn't do for him—short of going down there again." And with that he walked out of the room.

Claydon was incalculable enough for me to read a dozen different meanings into his words; but none of my interpretations satisfied me. I determined, at any rate, to seek no farther for a companion; and the next Sunday I travelled down to Grancy's alone. He met me at the station, and I saw at once that he had changed since our last meeting. Then he had been in fighting array, but now if he and grief still housed together it was no longer as enemies. Physically, the transformation was as marked but less reassuring. If the spirit triumphed the body showed its scars. At five-and-forty he was grey and stooping, with the tired gait of an old man. His serenity, however, was not the resignation of age. I saw that he did not mean to drop out of the game. Almost immediately he began to speak of our old interests, not with an effort, as at our former meeting, but simply and naturally, in the tone of a man whose life has flowed back into its normal channels. I remembered, with a touch of self-reproach, how I had distrusted his reconstructive powers; but my admiration for his reserved force was now tinged by the sense that, after all, such happiness as his ought to have been paid with his last coin. The feeling grew as we neared the house, and I found how inextricably his wife was interwoven with my remembrance of the place: how the whole scene was but an extension of that vivid presence.

Within doors nothing was changed, and my hand would have dropped without surprise into her welcoming clasp. It was luncheon-time, and Grancy led me at once to the dining-room, where the walls, the furniture, the very plate and porcelain, seemed a

mirror in which a moment since her face had been reflected. I wondered whether Grancy, under the recovered tranquility of his smile, concealed the same sense of her nearness, saw perpetually between himself and the actual her bright unappeasable ghost. He spoke of her once or twice, in an easy incidental way, and her name seemed to hang in the air after he had uttered it like a chord that continues to vibrate. If he felt her presence it was evidently as an enveloping medium, the moral atmosphere in which he breathed. I had never before known how completely the dead may survive.

After luncheon we went for a long walk through the autumnal fields and woods, and dusk was falling when we re-entered the house. Grancy led the way to the library, where, at this hour, his wife had always welcomed us back to a bright fire and a cup of tea. The room faced the west, and held a clear light of its own after the rest of the house had grown dark. I remembered how young she had looked in this pale gold light, which irradiated her eyes and hair or silhouetted her girlish outline as she passed before the windows. Of all the rooms the library was most peculiarly hers ; and here I felt that her nearness might take visible shape. Then, all in a moment, as Grancy opened the door, the feeling vanished and a kind of resistance met me on the threshold. I looked about me. Was the room changed ? Had some desecrating hand effaced the traces of her presence ? No ; here too the setting was undisturbed. My feet sank into the same deep-piled Daghestan ; the book-shelves took the firelight on the same rows of rich subdued bindings ; her armchair stood in its old place near the tea-table ; and from the opposite wall her face confronted me.

Her face—but *was* it hers ? I moved nearer and stood looking up at the portrait. Grancy's glance had followed mine, and I heard him move to my side.

" You see a change in it ? " he said.

" What does it mean ? " I asked.

" It means—that five years have passed."

" Over *her* ? "

" Why not ? Look at me ! " He pointed to his grey hair and furrowed temples. " What do you think kept *her* so young ? It was happiness ! But now—" He looked up at her with infinite tenderness. " I liked her better so," he said. " It's what she would have wished."

" Have wished ? "

" That we should grow old together. Do you think she would have wanted to be left behind ? "

I stood speechless, my gaze travelling from his worn, grief-beaten features to the painted face above. It was not furrowed like his ; but a veil of years seemed to have descended on it. The bright hair had lost its elasticity, the cheek its clearness, the brow its light : the whole woman had waned.

Grancy laid his hand on my arm. "You don't like it?" he said sadly.

"Like it? I—I've lost her!" I burst out.

"And I've found her," he answered.

"In *that*?" I cried, with a reproachful gesture.

"Yes; in that." He swung round on me almost defiantly. "The other had become a sham, a lie! This is the way she would have looked—does look, I mean. Claydon ought to know, oughtn't he?"

I turned suddenly. "Did Claydon do this for you?"

Grancy nodded.

"Since your return?"

"Yes. I sent for him after I'd been back a week—" He turned away and gave a thrust to the smouldering fire. I followed, glad to leave the picture behind me. Grancy threw himself into a chair near the hearth, so that the light fell on his sensitive, variable face. He leaned his head back, shading his eyes with his hand, and began to speak.

III

"You fellows knew enough of my early history to guess what my second marriage meant to me. I say guess, because no one could understand—really. I've always had a feminine streak in me, I suppose: the need of a pair of eyes that should see with me, of a pulse that should keep time with mine. Life is a big thing, of course; a magnificent spectacle; but I got so tired of looking at it alone! Still it's always good to live, and I had plenty of happiness—of the evolved kind. What I'd never had a taste of was the simple inconscient sort that one breathes in like the air. . . .

"Well—I met her. It was like finding the climate in which I was meant to live. You know what she was—how indefinitely she multiplied one's points of contact with life, how she lit up the caverns and bridged the abysses! Well, I swear to you (though I suppose the sense of all that was latent in me) that what I used to think of on my way home at the end of the day was simply that when I opened this door she'd be sitting over there, with the lamplight falling in a particular way on one little curl in her neck. . . . When Claydon painted her he caught just the look she used to lift to mine when I came in—I've wondered, sometimes, at his knowing how she looked when she and I were alone.—How I rejoiced in that picture! I used to say to her, 'You're my prisoner now—I shall never lose you. If you grew tired of me and left me you'd leave your real self there on the wall!' It was always one of our jokes that she was going to grow tired of me——

"Three years of it—and then she died. It was so sudden that there was no change, no diminution. It was as if she had suddenly become fixed, immovable, like her own portrait: as if time had ceased at its happiest hour, just as Claydon had thrown down his brush one day and said, 'I can't do better than that.'

" I went away, as you know, and stayed over there five years. I worked as hard as I knew how, and after the first black months a little light stole in on me. From thinking that she would have been interested in what I was doing I came to feel that she *was* interested —that she was there and that she knew. I'm not talking any psychical jargon—I'm simply trying to express the sense I had that an influence so full, so abounding as hers couldn't pass like a spring shower. We had so lived into each other's hearts and minds that the consciousness of what she would have thought and felt illuminated all I did. At first she used to come back shyly, tentatively, as though not sure of finding me ; then she stayed longer and longer, till at last she became again the very air I breathed. . . . There were bad moments, of course, when her nearness mocked me with the loss of the real woman ; but gradually the distinction between the two was effaced and the mere thought of her grew warm as flesh and blood.

" Then I came home. I landed in the morning and came straight down here. The thought of seeing her portrait possessed me, and my heart beat like a lover's as I opened the library door. It was in the afternoon and the room was full of light. It fell on her picture—the picture of a young and radiant woman. She smiled at me coldly across the distance that divided us. I had the feeling that she didn't even recognise me. And then I caught sight of myself in the mirror over there—a grey-haired broken man whom she had never known !

" For a week we two lived together—the strange woman and the strange man. I used to sit night after night and question her smiling face ; but no answer ever came. What did she know of me, after all ? We were irrevocably separated by the five years of life that lay between us. At times, as I sat here, I almost grew to hate her ; for her presence had driven away my gentle ghost, the real wife who had wept, aged, struggled with me during those awful years. . . . It was the worst loneliness I've ever known. Then, gradually, I began to notice a look of sadness in the picture's eyes ; a look that seemed to say : ' Don't you see that *I* am lonely too ? ' And all at once it came over me how she would have hated to be left behind ! I remembered her comparing life to a heavy book that could not be read with ease unless two people held it together ; and I thought how impatiently her hand would have turned the pages that divided us !—So the idea came to me : ' It's the picture that stands between us ; the picture that is dead, and not my wife. To sit in this room is to keep watch beside a corpse.' As this feeling grew on me the portrait became like a beautiful mausoleum in which she had been buried alive : I could hear her beating against the painted walls and crying to me faintly for help. . . .

" One day I found I couldn't stand it any longer and I sent for Claydon. He came down and I told him what I'd been through, and

what I wanted him to do. At first he refused point-blank to touch the picture. The next morning I went off for a long tramp, and when I came home I found him sitting here alone. He looked at me sharply for a moment, and then he said : ' I've changed my mind ; I'll do it.' I arranged one of the north rooms as a studio, and he shut himself up there for a day ; then he sent for me. The picture stood there as you see it now—it was as though she'd met me on the threshold and taken me in her arms ! I tried to thank him, to tell him what it meant to me, but he cut me short

" ' There's an up-train at five, isn't there ? ' he asked. ' I'm booked for a dinner to-night. I shall just have time to make a bolt for the station, and you can send my traps after me.' I haven't seen him since.

" I can guess what it cost him to lay hands on his masterpiece ; but, after all, to him it was only a picture lost, to me it was my wife regained ! "

IV

After that, for ten years or more, I watched the strange spectacle of a life of hopeful and productive effort based on the structure of a dream. There could be no doubt to those who saw Grancy during this period that he drew his strength and courage from the sense of his wife's mystic participation in his task. When I went back to see him a few month's later I found the portrait had been removed from the library and placed in a small study upstairs, to which he had transferred his desk and a few books. He told me he always sat there when he was alone, keeping the library for his Sunday visitors. Those who missed the portrait of course made no comment on its absence, and the few who were in his secret respected it. Gradually all his old friends had gathered about him, and our Sunday afternoons regained something of their former character ; but Claydon never reappeared among us.

As I look back now I see that Grancy must have been failing from the time of his return home. His invincible spirit belied and disguised the signs of weakness that afterward asserted themselves in my remembrance of him. He seemed to have an inexhaustible fund of life to draw on, and more than one of us was a pensioner on his superfluity.

Nevertheless, when I came back one summer from my European holiday and heard that he had been at the point of death, I understood at once that we had believed him well only because he wished us to.

I hastened down to the country and found him midway in a slow convalescence. I felt then that he was lost to us, and he read my thought at a glance.

" Ah," he said, " I'm an old man now, and no mistake. I suppose we shall have to go half-speed after this ; but we shan't need towing just yet ! "

The plural pronoun struck me, and involuntarily I looked up at Mrs. Grancy's portrait. Line by line I saw my fear reflected in it. It was the face of a woman *who knows that her husband is dying*. My heart stood still at the thought of what Claydon had done.

Grancy had followed my glance. "Yes, it's changed her," he said quietly. "For months, you know, it was touch and go with me—we had a long fight of it, and it was worse for her than for me." After a pause he added: "Claydon has been very kind; he's so busy nowadays that I seldom see him, but when I sent for him the other day he came down at once."

I was silent, and we spoke no more of Grancy's illness; but when I took leave it seemed like shutting him in alone with his death-warrant.

The next time I went down to see him he looked much better. It was a Sunday, and he received me in the library, so that I did not see the portrait again. He continued to improve, and towards spring we began to feel that, as he had said, he might yet travel a long way without being towed.

One evening, on returning to town after a visit which had confirmed my sense of reassurance, I found Claydon dining alone at the club. He asked me to join him, and over the coffee our talk turned to his work.

"If you're not too busy," I said at length, "you ought to make time to go down to Grancy's again."

He looked up quickly. "Why?" he asked.

"Because he's quite well again," I returned, with a touch of cruelty. "His wife's prognostications were mistaken."

Claydon stared at me a moment. "Oh *she* knows," he affirmed, with a smile that chilled me.

"You mean to leave the portrait as it is then?" I persisted.

He shrugged his shoulders. "He hasn't sent for me yet!"

A waiter came up with the cigars, and Claydon rose and joined another group.

It was just a fortnight later that Grancy's housekeeper telegraphed for me. She met me at the station with the news that he had been "taken bad," and that the doctors were with him. I had to wait for some time in the deserted library before the medical men appeared. They had the baffled manner of empirics who have been superseded by the great Healer; and I lingered only long enough to hear that Grancy was not suffering, and that my presence could do him no harm.

I found him seated in his armchair in the little study. He held out his hand with a smile.

"You see she was right after all," he said.

"She?" I repeated, perplexed for the moment.

"My wife," He indicated the picture. "Of course I knew she

had no hope from the first. I saw that "—he lowered his voice—" after Claydon had been here. But I wouldn't believe it at first!"

I caught his hands in mine. "For God's sake don't believe it now!" I adjured him.

He shook his head gently. "It's too late," he said. "I might have know that she knew."

"But, Grancy, listen to me," I began; and then I stopped. What could I say that would convince him? There was no common ground of argument on which we could meet; and after all it would be easier for him to die feeling that she *had* known. Strangely enough, I saw that Claydon had missed his mark. . . .

V

Grancy's will named me as one of his executors; and my associate, having other duties on his hands, begged me to assume the task of carrying out our friend's wishes. This placed me under the necessity of informing Claydon that the portrait of Mrs. Grancy had been bequeathed to him; and he replied by the next post that he would send for the picture at once. I was staying in the deserted house when the portrait was taken away; and as the door closed on it I felt that Grancy's presence had vanished too. Was it his turn to follow her now, and could one ghost haunt another?

After that, for a year or two, I heard nothing more of the picture, and though I met Claydon from time to time we had little to say to each other. I had no definable grievance against the man, and I tried to remember that he had done a fine thing in sacrificing his best picture to a friend; but my resentment had all the tenacity of unreason.

One day, however, a lady whose portrait he had just finished begged me to go with her to see it. To refuse was impossible, and I went with the less reluctance that I knew I was not the only friend she had invited. The others were all grouped around the easel when I entered, and after contributing my share to the chorus of approval I turned away and began to stroll about the studio. Claydon was something of a Collector, and his things were generally worth looking at. The studio was a long tapestried room with a curtained archway at one end. The curtains were looped back, showing a smaller apartment, with books and flowers and a few fine bits of bronze and porcelain. The tea-table standing in this inner room proclaimed that it was open to inspection, and I wandered in. A *bleu poudre* vase first attracted me; then I turned to examine a slender bronze Ganymede, and in so doing found myself face to face with Mrs. Grancy's portrait. I stared up at her blankly, and she smiled back at me in all the recovered radiance of youth. The artist had effaced every trace of his later touches and the original picture had reappeared. It throned alone on the panelled wall, asserting a brilliant supremacy over its carefully chosen surroundings. I felt in an in-

stant that the whole room was tributary to it; that Claydon had heaped his treasures at the feet of the woman he loved. Yes—it was the woman he had loved and not the picture; and my instinctive resentment was explained.

Suddenly I felt a hand on my shoulder.

"Ah, how could you?" I cried, turning on him.

"How could I?" he retorted. "How could I *not*? Doesn't she belong to me now?"

I moved away impatiently.

"Wait a moment," he said, with a detaining gesture. "The others have gone, and I want to say a word to you—Oh, I know what you've thought of me—I can guess! You think I killed Grancy, I suppose?"

I was startled by his sudden vehemence. "I think you tried to do a cruel thing," I said.

"Ah—what a little way you others see into life!" he murmured. "Sit down a moment—here, where we can look at her—and I'll tell you."

He threw himself on the ottoman beside me and sat gazing up at the picture, with his hands clasped about his knee.

"Pygmalion," he began slowly, "turned his statue into a real woman; *I* turned my real woman into a picture. Small compensation, you think—but you don't know how much of a woman belongs to you after you've painted her!—Well, I made the best of it, at any rate—I gave her the best I had in me; and she gave me in return what such a woman gives by merely being. And after all, she rewarded me enough by making me paint as I shall never paint again! There was one side of her, though, that was mine alone, and that was her beauty; for no one else understood it. To Grancy even it was the mere expression of herself—what language is to thought. Even when he saw the picture he didn't guess my secret—he was so sure she was all his! As though a man should think he owned the moon because it was reflected in the pool at his door——

"Well—when he came home and sent for me to change the picture it was like asking me to commit murder. He wanted me to make an old woman of her—of her who had been so divinely, unchangeably young! As if any man who really loved a woman would ask her to sacrifice her youth and beauty for his sake! At first I told him I couldn't do it—but afterward, when he left me alone with the picture, something queer happened. I suppose it was because I was always so confoundedly fond of Grancy that it went against me to refuse what he asked. Anyhow, as I sat looking up at her, she seemed to say, 'I'm not yours but his, and I want you to make me what he wishes.' And so I did it. I could have cut my hand off when the work was done—I daresay he told you I never would go back and look at it. He thought I was too busy—he never understood. . . .

" Well—and then last year he sent for me again—you remember. It was after his illness, and he told me he'd grown twenty years older, and that he wanted her to grow older too—he didn't want her to be left behind. The doctors all thought he was going to get well at that time, and he thought so too ; and so did I when I first looked at him. But when I turned to the picture—ah, now I don't ask you to believe me ; but I swear it was *her* face that told me he was dying, and that she wanted him to know it ! She had a message for him, and she made me deliver it."

He rose abruptly and walked toward the portrait ; then he sat down beside me again.

" Cruel ? Yes, it seemed so, to me at first ; and this time, if I resisted, it was for *his* sake and not for mine. But all the while I felt her eyes drawing me, and gradually she made me understand. If she'd been there in the flesh (she seemed to say) wouldn't she have seen before any of us that he was dying ? Wouldn't he have read the news first in her face ? And wouldn't it be horrible if now he should discover it instead in strange eyes ?—Well—that was what she wanted of me and I did it—I kept them together to the last ! " He looked up at the picture again. " But now she belongs to me," he repeated.

LORIMER STODDARD

1863–1901

THE INDIAN'S HAND

THE men had driven away. Their carts and horses disappeared behind the roll of the low hills. They appeared now and then, like boats on the crest of a wave, farther each time. And their laughter and singing and shouts grew fainter as the bushes hid them from sight.

The women and children remained, with two old men to protect them. They might have gone too, the hunters said. "What harm could come in the broad daylight?—the bears and panthers were far away. They'd be back by night, with only two carts to fill."

Then Jim, the crack shot of the settlement, said, "We'll drive home the bears in the carts."

The children shouted and danced as they thought of the sport to come, of the hunter's return with their game, of the bonfires they always built.

One pale woman clung to her husband's arm. "But the Indians!"

That made the men all laugh. "Indians!" they cried; "why, there've been none here for twenty years! We drove them away, down there"—pointing across the plain—"to a hotter place than this, where the sand burns their feet and they ride for days for water."

The pale woman murmured. "Ah, but they returned."

"Yes," cried her big husband, whose brown beard covered his chest, "and burned two cabins. Small harm they did, the curs!"

"Hush," said the pale woman, pressing her husband's arm; and the men around were quiet, pretending to fix their saddles, as they glanced at another woman, dressed in black, who turned and went into her house.

"I forgot her boy," said the bearded man, as he gravely picked up his gun.

They started off in the morning cool, toward the mountains where the trees grew. And the long shadows lessened as the sun crept up the sky.

The woman in black stood silent by her door. No one bade her good-bye. The other women went back to their houses to work. The children played in the dust; clouds rose as they shouted and ran. A day's freedom lay before them.

But the woman in black still stood by her door, like a spectre in the sunshine, her thin hands clasped together as she gazed away over the plain toward Mexico.

Her face was parched and drawn, as if the sun from the sand had burned into the bone. Her eyes alone seemed to live ; they were hard and bright.

Her house was a little away from the rest, on the crest of a hill facing the desert plain.

She had heard the words of the bearded man : " Small harm the Indians did." Had he forgotten her boy ? How could he forget, while she was there to remind them of the dead ? Near her house was a small rock roughly marked. The rude letters, " Will, gone, '69," she had cut on it with her own hands. It marked the last place where her boy had played. She remembered how she went away softly—so he should not cry to follow her—without a word, without a kiss. Here her hands beat the side of the house.

" Oh, to have that kiss now and die ! " But she had gone, unthinking, up the road where the pale woman lived, then a rosy-cheeked happy bride, not a widow like herself. They laughed and discussed the newcomers at the settlement. It was a holiday, for the men were away over the hills, cutting down trees to build their houses with.

As they talked there idly, they heard what they thought was the shrill bark of dogs running up the hill. Startled, they went to the window. Round the curve of the road came horses wildly galloping, and upon their backs— Here the pale woman shrieked and fled. They were Indians, beating their horses with their bare legs, their black hair streaming in the wind.

Like a flash, she had bolted the door and barred the shutters as they galloped up. She turned then. Through the open back door she saw the women run screaming up the hill, their children in their arms.

Their children ! Where was hers ? She stopped as if turned to stone, then undid the door.

They dragged her out by the wrists, by the hair. She fought with them stronger than ten men. But there were twenty ; she was alone. The little street was empty. They strangled her, beat down her face, dragged her upon a horse, and, with her crosswise on the saddle, galloped up and down, as they fired the cabins and the sheds. Her hands were shackled, and her eyes blind with blood, but she thought only of her child. " Where could he be ? "

There were gunshots. Down the hills like mad came the white men for their wives and children.

Then the Indians turned back toward the plain. They rode past her house.

There, where she had left him, stood the child, dazed with surprise. She held out her arms tied together and called to him to come.

"Fool! fool!" Here the woman in black struck her temples with her hands. "Fool!" Why had she not galloped by and never noticed him?

But she begged, caught at the horse's head, struggled to get to him; and the Indian stopped for a moment in his flight and caught up the child and went on.

Then the thought came to her of the end of that ride—what was to come—after. And she tried to drop the boy, to let him slide gently to the ground; but the Indian held them fast.

Behind, nearer, came the following men, louder the guns. The horse she was on snorted, staggered under the weight of the three, and as they reached the plain the child was torn from her, she was pushed away. But she rose and staggered after them amid the blinding dust. They must take her too. Sobbing, she called to them as she stumbled on. Many times she fell. Then she could go no more.

That was all. Her story ended there, with the thundering of horses' hoofs and the taste of dust in her mouth. They found her there unconscious. Her friends tended her. When she came back to life she asked no questions but left her neighbour's house and came to her door, where she was standing now, and gazed away over the sand where *he* had gone, down toward Mexico.

The years went by, and she was still alone in the house where *two* should have been. And now far off she saw the dust blowing in a long, rolling, pinkish line. But the dust blew so often, and nothing came of it—not even the Indians.

The boy she knew was dead, but they—his murderers—remained somewhere.

If she could have one now in her power!

The woman in black pondered, as she had so many times, how she should torture him. No pain could be too horrible. She looked at the fire in the stove, and piled on the logs—the logs that were brought with such trouble from the mountains where the trees grew. She could not make it hot enough. She dropped on her knees and watched the iron grow red. And the letters of the maker's name stamped on it grew distinct, and the word "Congress," half defaced, and the figures "64." Ah, those letters! she could have kissed the spot, for her child had touched it. Charmed by the glow, when left alone, he laid his baby hand flat on it, and burned deep into the palm were those letters, "S S, 64."

She would know him among a million by that mark.

But he was dead. The Indians remained.

The woman in black stood up. Why should she not go to them? There were pools in the plain where she could drink. That would be enough.

The men were away; the women were at work. Who could stop her?

She put on her bonnet and started off down the hill through the green bushes. The air was still crisp, though the sun was hot.

The desert must have an end. She would keep on to Mexico. She walked quickly, and her dress grew grey with dust, and the air scorching, as she reached the plain. But she kept on, and only looked back once at the house on the hill, and at the window where the pale woman sat.

The dust choked her, and she stumbled, and the sole of one shoe came half off, and slapped, and banged, and delayed her as she walked. She tore it off and went on, but the sand cut and burned her so that she sat down and wept, and wanted to go back for her other pair, the ones she wore on Sundays. The hill, though, looked so distant that she wearily got up and went on, on, till she could go no more, and crept under the shadow of a rock. There was no water near. Her throat was parched, and her temples beat wildly. She must go back and start again, strengthened, fortified. She would start to-morrow, or at night, when the cool would let her get too far to return.

By slow degrees she dragged herself up the hill. The pale woman came out of her house, and nodded, but the woman in black did not smile in return. She closed her door, and went up to her bed, and fell on it, and slept, amid the buzzing of the flies and the fitful flapping of the window-shade in the breeze.

The pale woman sighed and glanced across the plain. The roll of blowing dust was larger, and more regular, and nearer. The woman shuddered as she watched it creep slowly along behind the sand mounds. "It always blows," she said to herself, "but not like that, so steadily, so even." She strained her eyes, but there was only dust to be seen. Then she thought of a telescope that belonged to the minister's wife, who came from a seaport town, and ran to fetch it. The two women came out with it together, the minister's wife laughing at her friend, she was such a timid thing!

But the pale woman was paler than ever, and trembled so she could not steady it. The laughing one looked through it, and laughed no more.

"I see a head over the mound there," she said.

The pale woman shrieked.

"They are miles away. We may have time."

"For what?"

"To get away."

"They may be friends——"

"They are Indians! White men would not live through that sand. We must go to the woods. Help me. Warn the women. Gather the children. Come."

She rushed into her house. The other still stood and looked.

The dust cloud was a little nearer. In a moment all was wild confusion, names were called, but not loudly, girls sobbed, some

carried their little treasures, mothers held their children. All gathered together, hidden from the plain by a house.

The pale woman led out her father, then ran to her neighbour's door. She opened it, and called clearly, but softly, " Mary, Mary," There was no answer. The woman in black, on her bed, slept on. Her neighbour hesitated, then hurried after the others, as they ran up the low hills toward the mountains, where their men had gone.

The dust cloud grew nearer. Now and then a head could be seen But all was as still as the grave. The woman in black slept heavily and dreamed that revenge had come at last—that in her hand she held an Indian's head.

The window-shade flapped loudly, and she woke with an apprehension crushing her. She went to the window and looked out. There was no blowing dust upon the plains, and the street was empty. The doors of the houses stood open ; a shawl lay in the middle of the road. The woman leaned out and looked toward the woods.

She saw on the crest of a hill the white skirts of the flying women, and then, below, down the road, her ears sharpened, her heart tightening, she heard the soft, regular thumping of horses' feet.

Then she *knew*.

She sat on the edge of the bed. This was what she had waited for ! Was it her turn now ?—or theirs again ?

She could kill *one*.

Where was her gun ?

She had loaned it to the men.

But her axe—that was below.

As she started for it, there was a burst of war cries.

She ran down the narrow stairs, and took the axe from its place on the wall.

They were passing her door. The room grew lighter. She turned. One stood in the open doorway, black against the sunshine. She set her teeth hard, hid the axe behind her skirts, watched him motionless.

He stretched out his hand clawlike, and laughed, his eyes gleaming, as catlike he moved nearer. A terror seized her ; with a hoarse cry, she sprang up the stairs, flinging down a chair as he followed panting.

Quickly she climbed up the ladder to the loft, threw down the trapdoor, fell on it, bolted it, waited. All was still. Outside she heard the distant yells. She stooped noiselessly and put her ear upon the floor. There was soft breathing underneath, and through a crack in the floor she saw an eye peering up at her.

She stood a long time, motionless, axe in hand, ready.

Her back was to the bolt, but suddenly she *felt* that there was something there. She turned softly. A slim brown hand was almost through a crevice in the floor.

She raised her axe. The slender fingers touched the bolt and gently drew it back.

Then with the force of all her hatred fell the axe upon the wrist. The hand sprang up at her. With a howl of agony the creature fell bumping beneath.

Then all again was still.

Her face was wet and warm with the spattered blood.

Outside she heard the crackling of a burning house, then gunshots far away, and distant shouts. On tiptoe she went to the garret window, and peeped round its edge. Over the hills, quite near, she saw the men returning. One house was blazing—the minister's. The Indians were retreating. Near her door, grazing, stood a riderless horse. *She* knew its owner. As they rode past, they caught at it, but were stopped by a shout from her door. An Indian rushed out, handsome, young, holding aloft a bare right arm without a hand. In his language he shrieked to them for revenge, pointing up with his red wrist to the attic where she stood.

The eyes of the woman shot fire. She leaned far out and shook her fist from the garret window.

" One Indian at least ! "

She hurled the axe at them. It fell far short. They fired as they passed, but none hit her. Nearer came the men.

The wounded man leaped to his horse and with a curse rode on. The woman laughed as he passed beneath, then sat down in the dusky loft with a red pool at her feet.

Shortly the men returned. Some went by down the hill, after the Indians. Others put out the fire. All was confusion, bustle, shouts.

Then the women and the children came and added to the din, and the men who had followed returned. But the woman in black sat alone in the loft, till she heard the crowd at her door below, and the voice of the pale woman say :

" Where is Mary ? "

She rose and lifted the trap-door—it was unbolted—and went down.

The pale woman came to her, but she pushed her aside, and wiped her face with her sleeve.

" Are they killed ? any of them ? " she said. Her friend answered, " No, Mary not one." " No harm this time," said the bearded man. " Except my house, it is burned," said the minister's wife. " We'll soon have another."

" I don't mean *you !* " cried the woman in black. " I mean them —red devils. Have you got any ?—killed any ? *You* "—this to Jim, who never missed a shot—" you "—this to the bearded man—" have *you* killed any ? "

And the men answered, " No."

And one man said, " Their horses were faster than ours."

" Not one ! " The woman in black drew herself up proudly. " Yes, one ; better than killed. Wait." The woman shrunk from her as she darted up the stair. They looked at each other wonder-

ingly. The woman returned with something in her grasp. She flung it on the table. " It is an Indian's hand. His arm will shrivel to the bone. They will leave him some day to die in the sand." The women shuddered and drew back; the men crowded round, but they did not touched the hand.

" Are you afraid ? " said the woman in black. " Afraid of that thing ! "

She bent back the fingers and looked in it with a smile of contempt. Her face took an ashen hue: the hand struck the table edge and fell upon the floor. She seemed to be trying to think for a second, then she gave one awful cry, and leaned her face against the wall, with her hands hanging at her side.

The pale woman tried to go to her, but her husband drew her back, and, with a silent crowd around, slowly picked up the hand.

For a second he hesitated, then did as she had done, but gently. He bent back the fingers of the severed hand and read its history written there, " S S, 64," in white letters on the palm.

He remembered then how, twenty years ago, when she brought the child to him, he had tied its little hand in cooling salve.

It was larger now.

The whisper went around, " It is her boy's hand," and they crept toward the door.

The pale woman took a flower from her dress, one she had put there hours before, and place it in the brown fingers on the table and went out.

The woman did not stir from the wall. " Leave the hand," she said.

" It is there," and the bearded man closed the door gently behind him.

The woman in black turned. Her hard eyes were dim now. She took the hand from the table and undid her dress and placed it in her breast, and went to the window, and watched, far off, a cloud of dust made golden by the sun, as it rolled away across the plain, down toward Mexico.

MARY TRACY EARLE

1864

THE MAN WHO WORKED FOR COLLISTER

PERHAPS the loneliest spot in all the pine woods was the big Collister farm. Its buildings were not huddled in the centre of it, where they could keep one another in countenance, but each stood by itself, facing the desolate stretches of grey sand and pine stumps in its own way. Near each a few uncut pine trees kept guard, presumably for shade, but really sending their straggling shadows far beyond the mark. Many a Northern heart had ached from watching them, they were so tall and isolate ; for, having been forest-bred, they had a sad and detached expression when they stood alone or in groups, just like the Northern faces when they met the still distances of the South.

In Collister's day he and the man who worked for him were the only strangers who had need to wathc the pines. A land-improvement company had opened up the farm, but after sinking all its money in the insatiable depths of sandy soil, where the Lord, who knew best, had planted pine trees, the great bustling company made an assignment of its stumpy fields, and somewhat later the farm passed into the hands of Collister. Who Collister was, and where he came from, were variously related far and wide through the piney woods ; for he was one of those people whose lives are an odd blending of reclusion and notoriety. He kept up the little store on the farm : and, though it was usually his man who came up from the fields when any one stood at the closed store and shouted, its trade was largely augmented by the hope of seeing Collister.

The sunken money of the land company must have enriched the soil, for the farm prospered as well as the store, yielding unprecedentedly in such patches as the two men chose to cultivate. In mid-summer the schooner-captains, in their loose red shirts, came panting up two sunburned miles from the bayou to chaffer with Collister or his man over the price of water-melons ; and when their schooners were loaded, the land breeze which carried the cool green freight through bayou and bay out to the long reaches of the sound, where the sea wind took the burden on, sent abroad not only schooner and cargo and men, but countless strange reports of

the ways and doings of Collister. At least one of these bulletins never changed. Year after year, when fall came, and he had added the season's proceeds to his accumulating wealth—when even the peanuts had been dug, and the scent of their roasting spread through the piney woods on the fresh air of the winter evenings, making an appetising advertisement for the store—it was whispered through the country, and far out on the gulf, that Collister said he would marry any girl who could make good bread—light bread. That settled at least one question : Coillster came from the North. The man who worked for him was thought to have come from the same place ; but though he did the cooking, his skill must have left something to be desired, and after current gossip had risked all its surmises on the likelihood of Collister's finding a wife under the condition imposed, it usually added that if Collister married, the man who worked for him would take it as a slight, and leave.

An old country road led through the big farm, and along it the country people passed in surprising numbers and frequency for so sparsely settled a region. They took their way leisurely ; and if they could not afford a five-cent purchase at the store gave plenty of time to staring right and left behind the stumps, in a cheerful determination to see something worth remembrance. One day, when the store chanced to be standing open, one of these passers walked up to the threshold and stood for a while looking in. The room was small and dingy, lighted only by the opening of the door, and crammed with boxes, leaky barrels, farm produce, and side-meat. One corner had been arranged with calicoes and ribbons and threads ; but though the inspector was a young and pretty girl in the most dingy of cotton gowns, she had scarcely a thought for that corner ; she was staring at a man who was so hard at work rearranging the boxes and barrels that he did not notice her shadow at his elbow. Finally he glanced up of his own accord.

" Hello ! " he said, coming forward ; " do you want to buy something ? Why didn't you sing out ? "

For a little while longer the girl stared at him steadily as if he had not moved. Most of the people who live in the pine woods come to have a ragged look, but he was the raggedest person she had ever seen. He was as ragged as a bunch of pine needles ; yet he had the same clean and wholesome look, and his face was pleasant.

" Are you the man that works for Collister ? " she asked.

" Yes," he said.

The girl looked him up and down again with innocent curiosity. " How much does he give you ? " she asked.

" Nothing but my board and clothes," the man answered, and smiled. He did not seem to find it hard work to stand still and watch her while her black eyes swiftly catalogued each rag. When they reached his bare brown feet she laughed.

" Then I think he had ought to dress you better, an' give you

some shoes," she said.

" He does—winters," the man answered calmly.

She gave an impatient shake of her sun-bonnet. " That isn't the thing—just to keep you all warm," she exclaimed. " A man like Mr. Collister had ought to keep you looking 'ristocratic."

The man who worked for Collister grinned. " Not very much in Collister's line," he said. " We might get mixed up if I was too dressy." He pulled a cracker-box forward, and dusted it. " If you ain't in a hurry, you'd better come inside and take a seat," he added.

The girl sank to the doorstep instead, taking off her bonnet. Its slats folded together as she dropped it into her lap, and she gave a sigh of relief, loosening some crushed tresses of hair from her forehead. She seemed to be settling down for a comfortable inquisition.

" What kind of clothes does Mr. Collister wear ? " she began.

The man drew the cracker-box up near the doorway, and sat down. " Dressy," he said, " 'bout like mine."

The girl gave him a look which dared to say, " I don't believe it."

" Honest truth," the man nodded. " Would you like to have me call him up from the field, and show him to you ? "

Not to assent would have seemed as if she were daunted, and yet the girl had many more questions to ask about Collister. " Pretty soon," she said. " I suppose if you don't call him, he'll be coming for you. They say he works you mighty hard."

It is never pleasant to be spoken of as something entirely subject to another person's will. A slow flush spread over the man's face, but he answered loyally, " Collister may be mean to some folks, but he's always been mighty good to me." He smiled as he looked off from stump to stump across the clearing to the far rim of the forest. The stumps seemed to be running after one another, and gathering in groups to whisper secrets. " You've got to remember that this is a God-forsaken hole for anybody to be stuck in," he said ; " 'tain't in humanity for him to keep his soul as white as natural, more'n his skin ; but there's this to be said for Collister : he's always good to me."

" I'm right glad of that," the girl said. She too was looking out at the loneliness, and a little of it was reflected on her face. " You-all must think a heap of him," she added wistfully.

" You can just bet on that," he declared. " I've done him a heap of mean turns, too ; but they was always done 'cause I didn't know any better, so he don't hold me any grudge."

" Wouldn't he mind if he knew you were a-losing time by sitting here talking to me ? " she asked.

The man shook his head. " No," he answered cheerfully, " he wouldn't care—not for me. There isn't anybody else he would favour like that, but he makes it a point to accommodate me."

The girl gave her head a little turn. " Do you think he would accommodate me ? " she asked.

He looked her over critically as she had first looked at him. "It's a dangerous business answering for Collister," he ventured; "but maybe if I asked him he would."

"Well, you *are* bigoty," she asserted. "I can't noways see what there is betwixt you. Why, they say that whilst you're working he comes out in the field, an' bosses you under a umbrelly; an' "—a laugh carried her words along like leaves on dancing water—"an' that he keeps a stool stropped to his back, ready to set down on whenever he pleases. Is it true—'hones' truth'?"

A great mirth shook Collister's man from head to foot. "Such a figure—such a figure as the old boy cuts!" he gasped. "Sometimes I ask him if he'll keep his stool strapped on when he goes a-courting; and he says maybe so—it'll be so handy to hitch along closer to the young lady." Without thinking, he illustrated with the cracker-box as he spoke. "And as for the umbrella, I certainly ain't the one to object to that; for, you see, when the sun's right hot he holds it over me."

He leaned half forward as he spoke, smiling at her. It is hard to tell exactly when a new acquaintance ceases to be a stranger; but as the girl on the doorstep smiled in answer she was unexpectedly aware that the shrewd, kindly, furrowed face of this young man who worked for Collister was something which she had known for a long, long time. It seemed as familiar as the scent of pine needles and myrtle or as the shafts of blue, smoke-stained sunlight between the brown trunks of the pine trees in the fall, or as the feathery outline of green pine-tops against the dreamy intensity of a Southern sky; and when all this has been said of a girl who lives in the "pineys" there is no necessity for saying more. She gave a little nervous laugh.

The man began talking again. "It ain't such foolery as you would think, his wearing the stool and carrying the umbrella," he said. "This is the way he reasons it out, he says. In the first place there's the sun; that's a pretty good reason. But what started it was a blazing day up North, when he was hustling four deals at once; a man would need a head the size of a barrel to keep that sort of thing going for long, and Collister has just an ordinary head no bigger than mine. Well, the upshot of it was that he had a sunstroke, and was laid up a month; and then he reckoned up the day's business, and what he'd gained on one deal he'd lost on another, so that he came out even to a cent—queer, wasn't it?—with just the experience of a sunstroke to add to his stock-in-trade. Then he bought himself an umbrella and a stool, and began to take life fair and easy. Easy going is my way too; that's why we get along together."

There was a jar of candy on a shelf behind him and above his head, and turning, he reached up a long arm and took it down. It was translucent stick candy with red stripes round it—just such candy as every fortunate child knew twenty years ago, and some

know still. In the piney woods it has not been superseded as a standard of delight, and the children expect to receive it gratuitously after any extensive purchase. Near the coast, where Creole words have spread, it is asked for by a queer sweet name—lagnappe (something thrown in for good measure). The man who worked for Collister handed the jar across to the girl, making her free of it with a gesture.

"Do you reckon Mr. Collister would want me to take some?" she asked, poising her slender brown hand on the edge of the jar. "You know, they say that when he first come hyar, an' the children asked him for lagnappe, he pretended not to onderstan' 'em, and said he was sorry, but he hadn't got it yet in stock. Is that true?"

"Yes," the man answered; "that's true."

"Well, *did* he onderstan'?" she asked.

He lifted his shoulders in a way he had learned in the South. "To be sure," he said. "I told him at the time that it was a mean thing to do, but he said he simply couldn't help himself; young ones kept running here from miles around to get five cent's worth of baking-sody and ask for a stick of candy. But take some; he won't mind, for he's always good to me.

She drew back her hand. "No," she said, pouting; "I'm going to come in sometime when he's hyar, an' see if he'll give some lagnappe to me."

"I'll tell him to," the man said.

"Well, you *are* bigoty!" the girl repeated.

"If I was to tell him to," the man persisted, "who should I say would ask for it?"

She looked at him defiantly. "I'll do the telling," she said; "but while we're talking about names, what's your's?"

"Well," he answered, "if you're not naming any names, I don't believe I am. You know considerably more about me already than I do about you."

"Oh, just as you please," she said. To be brought blankly against the fact that neither knew the other's name caused a sense of constraint between them. She picked up her bonnet and put it on as if she might be about to go; and though she did not rise, she turned her face out-of-doors so that the bonnet hid it from him—and it was such a pretty face!

"Say, now," he began, after one of those pauses in which lives sometimes sway restlessly to and fro in the balances of fate, "I didn't mean to make you mad. I'll tell my name if you want to know."

"I'm not so anxious," she said. One of her brown hands went up officiously and pulled the bonnet still farther forward. "Is it true," she asked, "that Mr. Collister says he will marry any girl that can make good light bread?"

The man formed his lips as if to whistle, and then stopped.

" Yes," he said, eyeing the sun-bonnet, " it's true."

She turned round and surprised him. " I can make good light bread," she announced.

" You ! " he said.

" Yes," she answered sharply ; " why not ? It ain't so great a trick."

" But "—he paused, meeting the challenge of her face uneasily—" but did you come here to say that ? "

" You've heard me say it," she retorted.

He rose and stood beside her, looking neither at her, nor at the fields, nor at the encircling forest, but far over and beyond them all, at the first touches of rose-colour on the soft clouds in the west. He seemed very tall as she looked up at him, and his face was very grave. She had forgotten long ago to notice his bare feet and tattered clothing. " So that means," he said slowly, " that you came here to offer to marry a man that you never saw."

She did not answer for a moment, and when she did her voice was stubborn. " No," she said ; " I came hyar to say that I know how to make light bread. You needn't be faultin' me for his saying that he would marry any girl that could."

" But you would marry him ? "

" I allow if he was to ask me I would."

The man looked down squarely to meet her eyes, but he found only the sun-bonnet. " What would you do it for," he asked ; " a lark ? "

" A lark ? " she echoed ; " oh, yes, a lark ! "

He stooped toward her and put his hand on her shoulder. " Look up here," he said ; " I want to see if it's a lark or not."

" I jus' said it was," she answered, so low that he had to bend a little closer to be certain that he heard.

" That won't do," he said firmly ; " you must look up into my face."

" I—won't ! " she declared.

He stood gazing at her downcast head. There was something that shone in his eyes, and his tongue was ready to say, " You must." He closed his lips and straightened himself again. The girl sat perfectly still, except that once in a while there was a catch in her breath. He kept looking off into the empty, sighing reaches of pine country, which could make people do strange things. " We haven't known each other very long," he said at last ; " but a few minutes ago I thought we knew each other pretty well, and perhaps you don't have any better friend than I am in this desolate hole. Won't you tell me why it is you want to marry Collister ? "

" For his money ! " the girl answered shortly.

His face darkened as if he were cursing Collister's money under his breath ; but she did not look up, and he said nothing until he could speak quietly. " Is that quite fair to Collister ? " he asked.

" He did talk about marrying any girl that could make good light bread ; but I don't suppose he wanted to do it unless she liked him a little, too."

" I—allowed—maybe I'd like him a little," the girl explained ; " an' I was right sure that he'd like me."

" That's the mischief of it," the man muttered ; " I'll warrant he'll like you ! "

After hiding her face so long the girl looked up, and was surprised to see him so troubled. " You've been right good to me," she said gently, " an' I reckon I don't mind—perhaps I had ought to tell you jus' why I come. I—I don't think it's fair ; I won't tell him I can make good bread ; only "—she met his eyes appealingly—" if I don't, I don't see what I'm going to do."

" What's the matter ? " he asked. " Don't you have any home ? "

She smiled bravely, so that it was sorrowful to see her face. " Not any more," she said. " I've always had a right good home, but my paw died—only las' week. You an' Mr. Collister used to know him, an' he has spoken of you—both of you. He was Noel Seymour from up at Castauplay."

" Noel Seymour—dead ? " said the man. All her light words pleaded with him for tenderness now that he knew she had said them with aching heart. " But Seymour was a Creole," he added, " and you are not."

" My own mother was an American," the girl answered, " an' I learned my talk from her before she died ; an' then my stepmother is American, too." She stopped just long enough to try to smile again. " What do you think ? " she asked. " My stepmother don't like me. She isn't going to let me stay at home any more. Could you be as mean as that ? "

He put his hand on her shoulder. " You poor child ! " he said ; for gossip came sometimes in return for all that radiated from the farm, and he could recall a cruel story he once heard of Noel Seymour's wife. It made him believe all and more than the girl had told him. " Poor child ! " he said again ; " you haven't told me yet your first name."

" Ginevra," she answered. " My own mother liked it ; my stepmother says it's the name of a fool. She thinks she's young an' han'some ; but I allow she's sending me off because I'm a right smart, the best-favoured of the two. She wants to get married again, an' thar ain't but one bachelor up our way, so she's skeered he'd take first pick of me."

" My kingdom ! " said the man who worked for Collister. " If there's somebody up your way that you know, and that likes you, why didn't you go and take your chances with him ? "

A hot flush rushed over the girl's face. " Does you-all think I'd be talkin' like this to a man I knowed ? " she demanded. She stared angrily until her lips began to quiver. " An' besides, I hate

him ! " she cried. " He's not a fittin' man for such as me."

" You poor child ! " he said again.

She caught the compassion of his eyes. " What had any girl ought to do out hyar in the pineys if she was lef' like me ? I've hearn o' places whar girls could find work, an' my stepmother she allowed I could go to the oyster-factories in Potosi ; but whar would I *stay* ? An' then I went to the factories once with my paw, an' the air round 'em made me sick. You see, I was raised in the pineys, an' they had a different smell."

He shook his head, though kindly, at so slight a reason, and the sharp pain of his disapproval crossed her face. " Oh, you don't know anything about it," she cried desperately ; " thar ain't no man that can tell how it feels for a girl that's had a father that's made of her like mine did to be turned right out to face a whole townful that she never saw. Can't you see how if you was skeered it would be a heap easier jus' to face one man ? An' then I'd hearn no end about Mr. Collister, an' some of it was funny, an' thar wa'n't none of it very bad ; so I jus' made up my mind to come round hyar an' see for myse'f what like he was. You see," she went on, with a lift of the head, " it was for the money, but it was for the honourableness, too ; an' I'd cross my heart an' swear to you on the Bible that when I come hyar I hadn't no thought that anybody could think it was onder-reachin' Mr. Collister. I thought he'd be right proud, an' before we got to talking I never sensed that it would be a hard thing to name to him ; but now——" her voice trembled and broke. " Oh," she cried, " I wished I'd never come ! "

The man looked away from her. " Don't wish it," he said huskily. " Collister ought to be proud if he can have you for his wife ; and he would give you a good home and everything your heart could ask for."

Tears sprang from her eyes, and she dropped her head upon her knees to hide them. " Oh, I know, I know," she sobbed ; " but I'd rather marry you ! "

" O-oh ! " breathed the man who worked for Collister ; " I'd so much rather that you did." And with a laugh of pure delight he caught her up into his arms.

When they left the store a red blaze of sunset shone between the trunks of the pine trees. The man fastened the padlock behind them, and they started in a lover's silence along the road. The big farm was as empty and as lifeless as ever, except for the lonesome neighing of a horse in the barnyard, and for a single straight blue thread of smoke which rose from one of the little houses. The girl pointed at it, and smiled.

" He's having to get his own supper to-night," she said, " but I'll make it up to him ; I'll make his light bread jus' the same."

" Yes," he said, " you'd better ; for, whatever he's been to other folks, he's always been good to me ; an' please God, he's going to

be mighty good to you."

A breath of land breeze had started in the pine woods, and was going out bearing a tribute of sweet odours to the sea. The disc of the sun sank below the black line etched against a crimson sky. Softly and faintly in the far distance some passing creole hailed another with a long sweet call. They reached the edge of the clearing, and went on through the deepening twilight of the pines. There were no words in all the world quite true enough to speak in that great murmurous stillness that was in the woods and in their hearts. At last they came to a path beyond which she would not let him go, thinking it better for this last time to go on alone.

" Good-night," she said lingeringly ; and he held her close and kissed her, whispering good-night, then stood and watched her slender, swaying figure as it grew indistinct between the trees ; and just before it vanished he called out guardedly.

" Say," he summoned, " come here ! "

She went laughing back to him. " You-all *are* bigoty," she said, " beginning to order me about ! "

He took her hands, and held her from him so that he could see her face. " You mustn't be mad at me," he said ; " but there's something I forgot to tell you—I'm Collister."

RICHARD HARDING DAVIS
1864–1916

HOW HEFTY BURKE GOT EVEN

Hefty Burke was once clubbed by a policeman named M'Cluire, who excused the clubbing to His Honour by swearing that Hefty had been drunk and disorderly, which was not true. Hefty got away from the Island by swimming the East River, and swore to get even with the policeman. This story tells how he got even.

Mr. Carstairs was an artist who had made his first great success by painting figures and landscapes in Brittany. He had a studio at Fifty-eighth Street and Sixth Avenue, and was engaged on an historical subject in which there were three figures. One was a knight in full armour, and the other was a Moor, and the third was the figure of a woman. The suit of armour had been purchased by Mr. Carstairs in Paris, and was believed to have been worn by a brave nobleman, one of whose extravagant descendants had sold everything belonging to his family in order to get money with which to play baccarat. Carstairs was at the sale, and paid a large price for the suit of armour which the Marquis de Neuville had worn, and set it up in a corner of his studio. It was in eight or a dozen pieces, and quite heavy, but was wonderfully carved and inlaid with silver, and there were dents on it that showed where a Saracen's scimitar had been dulled and many a brave knight's spear had struck. Mr. Carstairs had paid so much for it that he thought he ought to make better use of it, if possible, than simply to keep it dusted and show it off to his friends. So he began his historical picture, and engaged Hefty Burke to pose as the knight and wear the armour. Hefty's features were not exactly the sort of features you would imagine a Marquis de Neuville would have ; but as his visor was down in the picture, it did not make much material difference ; and as his figure was superb, he answered very well. Hefty drove an ice-waggon during business hours, and, as a personal favour to Mr. Carstairs, agreed to pose for him, for a consideration, two afternoons of each week, and to sleep in the studio at night, for it was filled with valuable things.

The armour was a never-ending source of amazement and bewilderment to Hefty. He could not understand why a man would

wear such a suit, and especially when he went out to fight. It was the last thing in the world he would individually have selected in which to make war.

" Ef I was goin' to scrap wid anybody," he said to Mr. Carstairs, " I'd as lief tie meself up wid dumb-bells as take to carry all this stuff on me. A man wid a baseball bat and swimmin' tights on could dance all round youse and knock spots out of one of these things. The other lad wouldn't be in it. Why, before he could lift his legs or get his hands up you cud hit him on his helmet, and he wouldn't know what killed him. They must hev sat down to fight in them days."

Mr. Carstairs painted on in silence and smiled grimly.

" I'd like to have seen a go with the parties fixed out in a pair of these things," continued Hefty. " I'd bet on the lad that got in the first whack. He wouldn't have to do nothing but shove the other one over on his back and fall on him. Why, I guess this weighs half a ton if it weighs an ounce ! "

For all his contempt Hefty had a secret admiration for the ancient marquis who had worn this suit, and had been strong enough to carry its weight and demolish his enemies besides. The marks on the armour interested him greatly, and he was very much impressed one day when he found what he declared to be blood-stains on the lining of the helmet.

" I guess the old feller that wore this was a sport, eh ? " he said proudly, shaking the pieces on his arms until they rattled. " I guess he done 'em up pretty well for all these handicaps. I'll bet when he got to falling around on 'em and butting 'em with this fire helmet he made 'em purty tired. Don't youse think so ? "

Young Carstairs said he didn't doubt it for a moment.

The Small Hours Social Club was to give a prize masquerade ball at the Palace Garden on New Year's Night, and Hefty had decided to go. Every gentleman dancer was to get a white silk badge with a gold tassel, and every committee-man received a blue badge with " Committee " written across it in brass letters. It cost three dollars to be a committee-man, but only one dollar " for self and lady." There were three prizes—one of a silver water-pitcher for the " handsomest-costumed lady dancer," an accordion for the " best-dressed gent," and a cake for the most original idea in costume, whether worn by " gent or lady." Hefty, as well as many others, made up his mind to get the accordion, if it cost him as much as seven dollars, which was half of his week's wages. It wasn't the prize he wanted so much, but he thought of the impression it would make on Miss Casey, whose father was the well-known janitor of that name. They had been engaged for some time, but the engagement hung fire, and Hefty thought that a becoming and appropriate costume might hasten matters a little. He was undecided as to whether he should go as an Indian or as a courtier of the time of

Charles II. Auchmuty Stein, of the Bowery, who supplies costumes and wigs at reasonable rates, was of the opinion that a neat sailor suit of light blue silk and decorated with white anchors was about the "prettiest thing in the shop, and sheap at fife dollars"; but Hefty said he never saw a sailor in silk yet, and he didn't think they ever wore it. He couldn't see how they could keep the tar and salt water from ruining it.

The Charles II. Court suit was very handsome, and consisted of red cotton tights, blue velveteen doublet, and a blue cloak lined with pale pink silk. A yellow wig went with this, and a jewelled sword which would not come out of the scabbard. It could be had for seven dollars a night. Hefty was still in doubt about it, and was much perplexed. Auchmuty Stein told him Charlie Macklin, the Third Avenue ticket-chopper, was after the same suit, and that he had better take it while he could get it. But Hefty said he'd think about it. The next day was his day for posing, and as he stood arrayed in the Marquis de Neuville's suit of mail he chanced to see himself in one of the long mirrors, and was for the first time so struck with the ferocity of his appearance that he determined to see if old man Stein had not a suit of imitation armour which would not be so heavy and would look as well. But the more Hefty thought of it, the more he believed that only the real suit would do. Its associations, its blood-stains, and the real silver tracings haunted him, and he half decided to ask Mr. Carstairs to lend it to him.

But then he remembered overhearing Carstairs tell a brother artist that he had paid two thousand francs for it, and though he did not know how much a franc might be, two thousand of anything was too much to wear around at a masquerade ball. But the thing haunted him. He was sure if Miss Casey saw him in that suit she would never look at Charlie Macklin again.

"They wouldn't be in the same town with me," said Hefty. "And I'd get two of the prizes, sure."

He was in great perplexity, when good luck or bad luck settled it for him.

"Burke," said Mr. Carstairs, "Mrs. Carstairs and I are going out of town for New Year's Day, and will be gone until Sunday. Take a turn through the rooms each night, will you? as well as the studio, and see that everything is all right." That clinched the matter for Hefty. He determined to go as far as the Palace Garden as the Marquis de Neuville, and say nothing whatever to Mr. Carstairs about it.

Stuff M'Govern, who drove a night-hawk, and who was a particular admirer of Hefty's, even though as a cabman he was in a higher social scale than the driver of an ice-cart, agreed to carry Hefty and his half-ton of armour to the Garden, and call for him when the ball was over.

"Holee smoke!" gasped Mr. M'Govern, as Hefty stumbled

heavily across the pavement with an overcoat over his armour and his helmet under his arm. " Do you expect to do much dancing in that sheet-iron ? "

" It's the looks of the thing I'm gambling on," said Hefty. " I look like a locomotive when I get this stove-pipe on me head."

Hefty put on his helmet in the cab and pulled down the visor, and when he alighted the crowd around the door was too greatly awed to jeer, but stood silent with breathless admiration. He had great difficulty in mounting the somewhat steep flight of stairs which led to the dancing-room, and considered gloomily that in the event of a fire he would have a very small chance of getting out alive. He made so much noise coming up that the committee-men thought some one was rolling some one else down the stairs, and came out to see the fight. They observed Hefty's approach with whispered awe and amusement.

" Wot are you ? " asked the man at the door. " Youse needn't give your real name," he explained politely. " But you've got to give something if youse are trying for a prize, see ? "

" I'm the Black Knight," said Hefty in a hoarse voice, " the Marquis de Newveal ; and when it comes to scrappin' wid der perlice, I'm de best in der business."

This last statement was entirely impromptu, and inspired by the presence of Policeman M'Cluire, who, with several others, had been detailed to keep order. M'Cluire took this challenge calmly, and looked down and smiled at Hefty's feet.

" He looks like a stove on two legs," he said to the crowd. The crowd, as a matter of policy, laughed.

" You'll look like a fool standing on his head in a snow-bank if you talk impudent to me," said Hefty epigrammatically, from behind the barrier of his iron mask. What might have happened next did not happen, because at that moment the music sounded for the grand march, and Hefty and the policeman were swept apart by the crowd of Indians, Mexicans, courtiers, negro minstrels, and clowns. Hefty stamped across the waxed floor about as lightly as a safe could do it if a safe could walk. He found Miss Casey after the march and disclosed his identity. She promised not to tell, and was plainly delighted and flattered at being seen with the distinct sensation of the ball. " Say, Hefty," she said, " they just ain't in it with you. You'll take the two prizes sure. How do I look ? "

" Out o' sight," said Hefty. " Never saw you lookin' better."

" That's good," said Miss Casey simply, and with a sigh of satisfaction.

Hefty was undoubtedly a great success. The men came around him and pawed him, and felt the dents in the armour, and tried the weight of it by holding up one of his arms, and handled him generally as though he were a freak in a museum. " Let 'em alone," said Hefty to Miss Casey ; " I'm not saying a word. Let the judges get

on to the sensation I'm a-makin', and I'll walk off with the prizes. The crowd is wid me sure."

At midnight the judges pounded on a table for order, and announced that after much debate they gave the first prize to Miss Lizzie Cannon, of Hester Street, for "having the most handsomest costume on the floor, that of Columbia." The fact that Mr. "Buck" Masters, who was one of the judges, and who was engaged to Miss Cannon, had said that he would pound things out of the other judges if they gave the prize elsewhere was not known, but the decision met with as general satisfaction as could well be expected.

"The second prize," said the judges, "goes to the gent calling himself the Black Knight—him in the iron leggings—and the other prize for the most original costume goes to him too." Half the crowd cheered at this and only one man hissed. Hefty, filled with joy and with the anticipation of the elegance the ice-pitcher would lend to his flat when he married Miss Casey, and how conveniently he could fill it, turned on this gentleman and told him that only geese hissed.

The gentleman, who had spent much time on his costume, and who had been assured by each judge on each occasion that evening when he had treated him to beer that he would get the prize, told Hefty to go lie down. It has never been explained just what horrible insult lies back of this advice, but it is a very dangerous thing to tell a gentleman to do. Hefty lifted one foot heavily and bore down on the disappointed masker like an ironclad in a heavy sea. But before he could reach him, Policeman M'Cluire, mindful of the insult put upon him by this stranger, sprang between them and said, "Here now, no scrapping here; get out of this," and shoved Hefty back with his hand. Hefty uttered a mighty howl of wrath and long-cherished anger, and lurched forward, but before he could reach his old-time enemy three policemen had him around the arms and by the leg, and he was as effectually stopped as though he had been chained to the floor.

"Let go o' me!" said Hefty wildly. "You're smotherin' me. Give me a fair chance at him."

But they would not give him any sort of a chance. They rushed him down the steep stairs, and while M'Cluire ran ahead two more pushed back the crowd that had surged uncertainly forward to the rescue. If Hefty had declared his identity the police would have had a very sad time of it; but that he must not get Mr. Carstairs' two-thousand-franc suit into trouble was all that filled Hefty's mind, and all that he wanted was to escape. Three policemen walked with him down the street. They said they knew where he lived, and that they were only going to take him home. They said this because they were afraid the crowd would interfere if it imagined Hefty was being led to the precinct station-house.

But Hefty knew where he was going as soon as he turned the next

corner and was started off in the direction of the station-house. There was still quite a small crowd at his heels, and Stuff M'Govern was driving along at the side anxious to help, but fearful to do anything, as Hefty had told him not to let any one know who his fare had been and that his incognito must be preserved.

The blood rushed to Hefty's head like hot liquor. To be arrested for nothing, and by that thing M'Cluire, and to have the noble coat-of-mail of the Marquis de Neuville locked up in a dirty cell and probably ruined, and to lose his position with Carstairs, who had always treated him so well, it was terrible! It could not be! He looked through his visor; to the right and to the left a policeman walked on each side of him with his hand on his iron sleeve, and M'Cluire marched proudly before. The dim lamps of M'Govern's night-hawk shone at the side of the procession and showed the crowd trailing on behind. Suddenly Hefty threw up his visor. "Stuff," he cried, "are youse with me?"

He did not wait for any answer, but swung back his two iron arms and then brought them forward with a sweep on to the back of the necks of the two policemen. They went down and forward as if a lamp-post had fallen on them, but were up again in a second. But before they could rise Hefty set his teeth, and with a gurgle of joy butted his iron helmet into M'Cluire's back and sent him flying forward into a snow-bank. Then he threw himself on him and buried him under three hundred pounds of iron and flesh and blood, and beat him with his mailed hand over the head and choked the snow and ice down into his throat and nostrils.

"You'll club me again, will you?" he cried. "You'll send me to to the Island?" The two policemen were pounding him with their night-sticks as effectually as though they were rapping on a door-step; and the crowd, seeing this, fell on them from behind, led by Stuff M'Govern with his whip, and rolled them in the snow and tried to tear off their coat-tails, which means money out of the policeman's own pocket for repairs, and hurts more than broken ribs, as the Police Benefit Society pays for them.

"Now then, boys, get me into a cab," cried Hefty. They lifted him in, and obligingly blew out the lights so that the police could not see its number, and Stuff drove Hefty proudly home.

"I guess I'm even with that cop now," said Hefty, as he stood at the door of the studio building perspiring and happy; "but if them cops ever find out who the Black Knight was, I'll go away for six months on the Island. I guess," he added thoughtfully, "I'll have to give them two prizes up."

A RECRUIT AT CHRISTMAS

RICHARD HARDING DAVIS

YOUNG Lieutenant Claflin left the Brooklyn Navy Yard at an early hour, and arrived at the recruiting office at ten o'clock. It was the day before Christmas, and even the Bowery, "the thieves' highway," had taken on the emblems and spirit of the season, and the young officer smiled grimly as he saw a hard-faced proprietor of a saloon directing the hanging of wreaths and crosses over the door of his palace and telling the assistant barkeeper to make the red holly berries "show up" better.

The cheap lodging-houses had trailed the green over their illuminated transoms, and even on Mott Street the Chinamen had hung up strings of evergreen over the doors of the joss-house and the gambling-house next door. And the tramps and good-for-nothings, just back from the Island, had an animated, expectant look, as though something certainly was going to happen.

Lieutenant Claflin nodded to Corporal Goddard at the door of the recruiting office, and startled that veteran's rigidity, and kept his cotton-gloved hand at his visor longer than the Regulations required, by saying, "Wish you merry Christmas," as he jumped up the stairs.

The recruiting office was a dull, blank-looking place, the view from the windows was not inspiring, and the sight of the plump and black-eyed Jewess in front of the pawnshop across the street, who was a vision of delight to Corporal Goddard, had no attractions to the officer upstairs. He put on his blue jacket, with the black braid down the front, lighted a cigar, and wrote letters on every other than official matters, and forgot about recruits. He was to have leave of absence on Christmas, and though the others had denounced him for leaving the mess table on that day, they had forgiven him when he explained that he was going to spend it with his people at home. The others had homes as far away as San Francisco and as far inland as Milwaukee, and some called the big ship of war home; but Claflin's people lived up in Connecticut, and he could reach them in a few hours. He was a very lucky man, the others said, and he felt very cheerful over it, and forgot the blank-looking office with its Rules and Regulations, and coloured prints of uniforms, and models of old warships, and tin boxes of official documents which were to be filled out and sent to "the Honourable, the Secretary of the Navy."

Corporal Goddard on the stoop below shifted from one foot to the other, and chafed his gloved hands softly together to keep them

warm. He had no time to write letters on unofficial writing paper, nor to smoke cigars or read novels with his feet on a chair, with the choice of looking out at the queer stream of human life moving by below the window on the opposite side of the Bowery. He had to stand straight, which came easily to him now, and to answer questions and urge doubtful minds to join the ranks of the government's marines.

A drunken man gazed at Ogden's coloured pictures of the American infantry, cavalry, and marine uniforms that hung before the door, and placed an unsteady finger on the cavalryman's picture, and said he chose to be one of those. Corporal Goddard told him severely to be off and get sober and grow six inches before he thought of such a thing, and frowned him off the stoop.

Then two boys from the country asked about the service, and went off very quickly when they found they would have to remain in it for three years at least. A great many more stopped in front of the gay pictures and gazed admiringly at Corporal Goddard's bright brass buttons and brilliant complexion, which they innocently attributed to exposure to the sun on long, weary marches. But no one came to offer himself in earnest. At one o'clock Lieutenant Claflin changed his coat and went down town to luncheon, and came back still more content and in feeling with the season, and lighted another cigar.

But just as he had settled himself comfortably, he heard Corporal Goddard's step on the stairs and a less determined step behind him. He took his feet down from the rung of the other chair, pulled his undress jacket into place, and took up a pen.

Corporal Goddard saluted at the door and introduced with a wave of his hand the latest applicant for Uncle Sam's service. The applicant was as young as Lieutenant Claflin, and as good-looking; but he was dirty and unshaven, and his eyes were set back in the sockets, and his fingers twitched at his side. Lieutenant Claflin had seen many applicants in this stage. He called it the remorseful stage, and was used to it.

"Name?" said Lieutenant Claflin, as he pulled a printed sheet of paper towards him.

The applicant hesitated, then he said—

"Walker—John Walker."

The lieutenant noticed the hesitation, but he merely remarked to himself, "It's none of my business," and added, aloud, "Nationality?" and wrote United States before the applicant answered.

The applicant said he was unmarried, was twenty-three years old, and had been born in New York city. Even Corporal Goddard knew this last was not so, but it was none of his business, either. He moved the applicant up against the wall under the measuring rod, and brought it down on his head.

So he measured and weighed the applicant, and tested his eyesight

with printed letters and bits of coloured yarn, and the lieutenant kept tally on the sheet, and bit the end of his pen and watched the applicant's face. There were a great many applicants, and few were chosen ; but none of them had quite the air about him which this one had. Lieutenant Claflin thought Corporal Goddard was just a bit too callous in the way he handled the applicant, and too peremptory in his questions ; but he could not tell why Corporal Goddard treated them all in that way. Then the young officer noticed that the applicant's white face was flushing, and that he bit his lips when Corporal Goddard pushed him towards the weighing machine as he would have moved a barrel of flour.

" You'll answer," said Lieutenant Claflin, glancing at the sheet. " Your average is very good. All you've got to do now is to sign this, and then it will be over." But he did not let go of the sheet in his hand, as he would have done had he wanted it over. Neither did the applicant move forward to sign.

" After you have signed this," said the young officer, keeping his eyes down on the paper before him, " you will have become a servant of the United States ; you will sit in that other room until the office is closed for to-day, and then you will be led over to the Navy Yard and put into a uniform, and from that time on for three years you will have a number, the same number as the one on your musket. You and the musket will both belong to the government. You will clean and load the musket, and fight with it if God ever gives us the chance ; and the government will feed you and keep you clean, and fight with you if needful."

The lieutenant looked up at the corporal and said, " You can go, Goddard," and the corporal turned on his heel and walked downstairs, wondering.

" You may spend the three years," continued the officer, still without looking at the applicant, " which are the best years of a young man's life, on the sea, visiting foreign ports, or you may spend it marching up and down the Brooklyn Navy Yard and cleaning brass work. There are some men who are meant to clean brass work and to march up and down in front of a stone arsenal, and who are fitted for nothing else. But to every man is given something which should tell him that he is put there to make the best of himself. Every man has that, even the men who are only fit to clean brass rods ; but some men kill it, or try to kill it, in different ways, generally by rum. And they are as generally successful, if they keep the process up long enough. The government, of which I am a very humble representative, is always glad to get good men to serve her, but it seems to me (and I may be wrong, and I'm quite sure that I am speaking contrary to Regulations) that some of her men can serve her better in other ways than swabbing down decks. Now, you know yourself best. It may be that you are just the sort of man to stand up and salute the ladies when they come on board to see the

ship, and to watch them from for'ard as they walk about with the officers. You won't be allowed to speak to them; you will be Number 329 or 328, and whatever benefits a good woman can give a man will be shut off from you, more or less, for three years.

"And, on the other hand, it may be that there are some good women who could keep you on shore, and help you to do something more with yourself than to carry a musket. And, again, it may be that if you stayed on shore you would drink yourself more or less comfortably to death, and break somebody's heart. I can't tell. But if I were not a commissioned officer of the United States, and a thing of Rules and Regulations who can dance and wear a uniform, and a youth generally unfit to pose as an example, I would advise you not to sign this, but to go home and brace up and leave whisky alone.

"Now, what shall we do?" said the young lieutenant, smiling; "shall we tear this up, or will you sign it?"

The applicant's lips were twitching as well as his hands now, and he rubbed his cuff over his face and smiled back.

"I'm much obliged to you," he said nervously. "That sounds a rather flat thing to say, I know, but if you knew all I meant by it, though, it would mean enough. I've made a damned fool of myself in this city, but nothing worse. And it was a choice of the navy, where they'd keep me straight, or going to the devil my own way. But it won't be my own way now, thanks to you. I don't know how you saw how it was so quickly; but, you see, I have got a home back in Connecticut, and women that can help me there, and I'll go back to them and ask them to let me start in again where I was when I went away."

"That's good," said the young officer cheerfully; "that's the way to talk. Tell me where you live in Connecticut, and I'll lend you the car fare to get there. I'll expect it back with interest, you know," he said, laughing.

"Thank you," said the rejected applicant. "It's not so far but that I can walk, and I don't think you'd believe in me if I took money."

"Oh, yes, I would," said the lieutenant. "How much do you want?"

"Thank you, but I'd rather walk," said the other. "I can get there easily enough by to-morrow. I'll be a nice Christmas present, won't I?" he added grimly.

"You'll do," said the young officer. "I fancy you'll be about as welcome a one as they'll get." He held out his hand and the other shook it, and walked out with his shoulders as stiff as those of Corporal Goddard.

Then he came back and looked into the room shyly. "I say," he said hesitatingly. The lieutenant ran his hand down into his pocket. "You've changed your mind? he asked eagerly. "That's good. How much will you want?"

The rejected applicant flushed. "No, not that," he said. "I just came back to say—wish you a merry Christmas."

"O. HENRY"
(WILLIAM SYDNEY PORTER)
1862–1910

THE TRIMMED LAMP

Of course there are two sides to the question. Let us look at the other. We often hear "shop-girls" spoken of. No such persons exist. There are girls who work in shops. They make their living that way. But why turn their occupation into an adjective? Let us be fair. We do not refer to the girls who live on Fifth Avenue as "marriage-girls."

Lou and Nancy were chums. They came to the big city to find work because there was not enough to eat at their homes to go around. Nancy was nineteen; Lou was twenty. Both were pretty, active, country girls who had no ambition to go on the stage.

The little cherub that sits up aloft guided them to a cheap and respectable boarding-house. Both found positions and became wage-earners. They remained chums. It is at the end of six months that I would beg you to step forward and be introduced to them. Meddlesome Reader: My Lady Friends, Miss Nancy and Miss Lou. While you are shaking hands please take notice—cautiously—of their attire. Yes, cautiously; for they are as quick to resent a stare as a lady in a box at the horse show is.

Lou is a piece-work ironer in a hand laundry. She is clothed in a badly-fitting purple dress, and her hat plume is four inches too long; but her ermine muff and scarf cost $25, and its fellow beasts will be ticketed in the windows at $7.98 before the season is over. Her cheeks are pink, and her light-blue eyes bright. Contentment radiates from her.

Nancy you would call a shop-girl—because you have the habit. There is no type; but a perverse generation is always seeking a type; so this is what the type should be. She has the high-ratted pompadour, and the exaggerated straight-front. Her skirt is shoddy, but has the correct flair. No furs protect her against the bitter spring air, but she wears her short broadcloth jacket as jauntily as though it were Persian lamb! On her face and in her eyes, remorseless type-seeker, is the typical shop-girl expression. It is a look of silent but contemptuous revolt against cheated womanhood; of sad prophecy of the vengeance to come. When she laughs her loudest the look is still there. The same look can be

seen in the eyes of Russian peasants ; and those of us left will see it some day on Gabriel's face when he comes to blow us up. It is a look that should wither and abash man ; but he has been known to smirk at it and offer flowers—with a string tied to them.

Now lift your hat and come away, while you receive Lou's cheery "See you again," and the sardonic, sweet smile of Nancy that seems, somehow, to miss you and go fluttering like a white moth up over the house-tops to the stars.

The two waited on the corner for Dan. Dan was Lou's steady company ? Faithful ? Well he was on hand when Mary would have had to hire a dozen subpœna servers to find her lamb.

"Ain't you cold, Nance ? " said Lou. "Say, what a chump you are for working in that old store for $8 a week ! I made $18.50 last week. Of course ironing ain't as swell work as selling lace behind a counter, but it pays. None of us ironers make less than $10. And I don't know that it's any less respectful work, either."

"You can have it," said Nancy, with uplifted nose. "I'll take my eight a week and hall bedroom. I like to be among nice things and swell people. And look what a chance I've got ! Why, one of our glove girls married a Pittsburg—steel maker, or blacksmith, or something—the other day worth a million dollars. I'll catch a swell myself some time. I ain't bragging on my looks or anything ; but I'll take my chances where there's big prizes offered. What show would a girl have in a laundry ? "

"Why, that's where I met Dan," said Lou triumphantly. "He came in for his Sunday shirt and collars and saw me at the first board, ironing. We all try to get to work at the first board. Ella Maginnis was sick that day, and I had her place. He said he noticed my arms first, how round and white they was. I had my sleeves rolled up. Some nice fellows come into laundries. You can tell 'em by their bringing their clothes in suit-cases, and turning in the door sharp and sudden."

"How can you wear a waist like that, Lou ? " said Nancy, gazing down at the offending article with sweet scorn in her heavy-lidded eyes. "It shows fierce taste."

"This waist ? " cried Lou, with wide-eyed indignation. "Why, I paid $16 for this waist. It's worth twenty-five. A woman left it to be laundered, and never called for it. The boss sold it to me. It's got yards and yards of hand embroidery on it. Better talk about that ugly, plain thing you've got on."

"This ugly, plain thing," said Nancy calmly, "was copied from one that Mrs. Van Alstyne Fisher was wearing. The girls say her bill in the store last year was $12,000. I made mine myself. It cost me $1.50. Ten feet away you couldn't tell it from hers."

"Oh, well," said Lou good-naturedly, "if you want to starve and put on airs, go ahead. But I'll take my job and good wages ; and after hours give me something as fancy and attractive to wear

as I am able to buy."

But just then Dan came—a serious young man with a ready-made necktie, who had escaped the city's brand of frivolity—an electrician earning $30 per week who looked upon Lou with the sad eyes of Romeo, and thought her embroidered waist a web in which any fly should delight to be caught.

"My friend, Mr. Owens—shake hands with Miss Danforth," said Lou.

"I'm mighty glad to know you, Miss Danforth," said Dan, with outstretched hand. "I've heard Lou speak of you so often."

"Thanks," said Nancy, touching his fingers with the tips of her cool ones, "I've heard her mention you—a few times."

Lou giggled.

"Did you get that handshake from Mrs. Van Alstyne Fisher, Nance?" she asked.

"If I did, you can feel safe in copying it," said Nancy.

"Oh, I couldn't use it at all. It's too stylish for me. It's intended to set off diamond rings, that high shake is. Wait till I get a few and then I'll try it."

"Learn it first," said Nancy wisely, "and you'll be more likely to get the rings."

"Now, to settle this argument," said Dan with his ready, cheerful smile, "let me make a proposition. As I can't take both of you up to Tiffany's and do the right thing, what do you say to a little vaudeville? I've got the tickets. How about looking at stage diamonds since we can't shake hands with the real sparklers?"

The faithful squire took his place close to the curb; Lou next, a little peacocky in her bright and pretty clothes; Nancy on the inside, slender, and soberly clothed as the sparrow, but with the true Van Alstyne Fisher walk—thus they set out for their evening's moderate diversion.

I do not suppose that many look upon a great department store as an educational institution. But the one in which Nancy worked was something like that to her. She was surrounded by beautiful things that breathed of taste and refinement. If you live in an atmosphere of luxury, luxury is yours whether your money pays for it, or another's.

The people she served were mostly women whose dress, manners, and position in the social world were quoted as criterions. From them Nancy began to take toll—the best from each according to her view.

From one she would copy and practise a gesture, from another an eloquent lifting of an eyebrow, from others, a manner of walking, of carrying a purse, of smiling, of greeting a friend, of addressing "inferiors in station." From her best beloved model, Mrs. Van Alstyne Fisher, she made requisition for that excellent thing, a soft, low voice as clear as silver and as perfect in articulation as the notes of a thrush. Suffused in the aura of this high social refinement and good breeding, it was impossible for her to escape a deeper effect of

it. As good habits are said to be better than good principles, so, perhaps, good manners are better than good habits. The teachings of your parents may not keep alive your New England conscience ; but if you sit on a straight-back chair and repeat the words " prisms and pilgrims " forty times the devil will flee from you. And when Nancy spoke in the Van Alstyne Fisher tones she felt the thrill of *noblesse oblige* to her very bones.

There was another source of learning in the great departmental school. Whenever you see three or four shop-girls gather in a bunch and jingle their wire bracelets as an accompaniment to apparently frivolous conversation, do not think that they are there for the purpose of criticising the way Ethel does her back hair. The meeting may lack the dignity of the deliberate bodies of man ; but it has all the importance of the occasion on which Eve and her first daughter first put their heads together to make Adam understand his proper place in the household. It is Woman's Conference for Common Defence and Exchange of Strategical Theories of Attack and Repulse upon and against the World, which is a Stage, and Man, its Audience who Persists in Throwing Bouquets Thereupon. Woman, the most helpless of the young of any animal—with the fawn's grace but without its fleetness ; with the bird's beauty but without its power of flight ; with the honey bee's burden of sweetness but without its—Oh, let's drop that simile—some of us may have been stung.

During this council of war they pass weapons one to another, and exchange stratagems that each has devised and formulated out of the tactics of life.

" I says to 'im," says Sadie, " ain't you the fresh thing ! Who do you suppose I am, to be addressing such a remark to me ? And what do you think he says back to me ? "

The heads, brown, black, flaxen, red, and yellow bob together ; the answer is given ; and the parry to the thrust is decided upon, to be used by each thereafter in passages-at-arms with the common enemy, man.

Thus Nancy learned the art of defence ; and to women successful defence means victory.

The curriculum of a department store is a wide one. Perhaps no other college could have fitted her as well for her life's ambition—the drawing of a matrimonial prize.

Her station in the store was a favoured one. The music-room was near enough for her to hear and become familiar with the works of the best composers—at least to acquire the familiarity that passed for appreciation in the social world in which she was vaguely trying to set a tentative and aspiring foot. She absorbed the educating influence of art wares, of costly and dainty fabrics, of adornments that are almost culture to women.

The other girls soon became aware of Nancy's ambition. " Here

comes your millionaire, Nance," they would call to her whenever any man who looked the rôle approached her counter. It got to be a habit of men, who were hanging about while their women-folk were shopping, to stroll over to the handkerchief counter and dawdle over the cambric squares. Nancy's imitation high-bred air and genuine dainty beauty was what attracted. Many men thus came to display their graces before her. Some of them may have been millionaires; others were certainly no more than their sedulous apes. Nancy learned to discriminate. There was a window at the end of the handkerchief counter; and she could see the rows of vehicles waiting for the shoppers in the street below. She looked, and perceived that automobiles differ as well as do their owners.

Once a fascinating gentleman bought four dozen handkerchiefs, and wooed her across the counter with a King Cophetua air. When he had gone, one of the girls said:

"What's wrong, Nance, that you didn't warm up to that fellow? He looks the swell article, all right, to me."

"Him?" said Nancy, with her coolest, sweetest, most impersonal, Van Alstyne Fisher smile; "not for mine. I saw him drive up outside. A 12 H.P. machine and an Irish chauffeur! And you saw what kind of handkerchiefs he bought—silk! And he's got dactylis on him. Give me the real thing or nothing, if you please."

Two of the most "refined" women in the store—a forelady and a cashier—had a few "swell gentlemen friends" with whom they now and then dined. Once they included Nancy in an invitation. The dinner took place in a spectacular café whose tables are engaged for New Year's Eve a year in advance. There were two "gentlemen friends"—one without any hair on his head—high living ungrew it; and we can prove it—the other a young man whose worth and sophistication he impressed upon you in two convincing ways—he swore that all the wine was corked; and he wore diamond cuff buttons. This young man perceived irresistible excellences in Nancy. His taste ran to shop-girls; and here was one that added the voice and manner of his high social world to the franker charms of her own caste. So, on the following day, he appeared in the store and made her a serious proposal of marriage over a box of hemstitched, grass-bleached Irish linens. Nancy declined. A brown pompadour ten feet away had been using her eyes and ears. When the rejected suitor had gone she heaped carboys of upbraidings and horror upon Nancy's head.

"What a terrible little fool you are! That fellow's a millionaire—he's a nephew of old Van Skittles himself. And he was talking on the level, too. Have you gone crazy, Nance?"

"Have I?" said Nancy. "I didn't take him, did I? He isn't a millionaire so hard that you could notice it, anyhow. His family only allows him $20,000 a year to spend. That bald-headed fellow was guying him about it the other night at supper."

The brown pompadour came nearer and narrowed her eyes.

"Say, what do you want?" she inquired, in a voice hoarse for lack of chewing-gum. "Ain't that enough for you? Do you want to be a Mormon, and marry Rockefeller and Gladstone Dowie and the King of Spain and the whole bunch? Ain't $20,000 a year good enough for you?"

Nancy flushed a little under the level gaze of the black, shallow eyes.

"It wasn't altogether the money, Carrie," she explained. "His friend caught him in a rank lie the other night at dinner. It was about some girl he said he hadn't been to the theatre with. Well, I can't stand a liar. Put everything together—I don't like him; and that settles it. When I sell out it's not going to be on any bargain day. I've got to have something that sits up in a chair like a man, anyhow. Yes, I'm looking out for a catch; but it's got to be able to do something more than make a noise like a toy bank."

"The physiopathic ward for yours!" said the brown pompadour, walking away.

These high ideas, if not ideals—Nancy continued to cultivate on $8 per week. She bivouacked on the trail of the great unknown "catch," eating her dry bread and tightening her belt day by day. On her face was the faint, soldierly, sweet grim smile of the preordained man-hunter. The store was her forest; and many times she raised her rifle at game that seemed broad-antlered and big; but always some deep unerring instinct—perhaps of the huntcress, perhaps of the woman—made her hold her fire and take up the trail again.

Lou flourished in the laundry. Out of her $18.50 per week she paid $6 for her room and board. The rest went mainly for clothes. Her opportunities for bettering her taste and manners were few compared with Nancy's. In the steaming laundry there was nothing but work, work and her thoughts of the evening pleasures to come. Many costly and showy fabrics passed under her iron; and it may be that her growing fondness for dress was thus transmitted to her through the conducting metal.

When the day's work was over Dan awaited her outside, her faithful shadow in whatever light she stood.

Sometimes he cast an honest and troubled glance at Lou's clothes that increased in conspicuity rather than in style; but this was no disloyalty; he deprecated the attention they called to her in the streets.

And Lou was no less faithful to her chum. There was a law that Nancy should go with them on whatsoever outings they might take. Dan bore the extra burden heartily and in good cheer. It might be said that Lou furnished the colour, Nancy the tone, and Dan the weight of the distraction-seeking trio. The escort, in his neat but obviously ready-made suit, his ready-made tie and unfailing, genial,

ready-made wit never startled or clashed. He was of that good kind that you are likely to forget while they are present, but remember distinctly after they are gone.

To Nancy's superior taste the flavour of these ready-made pleasures was sometimes a little bitter: but she was young; and youth is a gourmand, when it cannot be a gourmet.

"Dan is always wanting me to marry him right away," Lou told her once. "But why should I? I'm independent. I can do as I please with the money I earn; and he never would agree for me to keep on working afterward. And say, Nance, what do you want to stick to that old store for, and half starve and half dress yourself? I could get you a place in the laundry right now if you'd come. It seems to me that you could afford to be a little less stuck-up if you could make a good deal more money."

"I don't think I'm stuck up, Lou," said Nancy, "but I'd rather live on half-rations and stay where I am. I suppose I've got the habit. It's the chance that I want. I don't expect to be always behind the counter. I'm learning something new every day. I'm right up against refined and rich people all the time—even if I do only wait on them; and I'm not missing any pointers that I see passing around."

"Caught your millionaire yet?" asked Lou, with her teasing laugh.

"I haven't selected one yet," answered Nancy. "I've been looking them over."

"Goodness! the idea of picking over 'em! Don't you ever let one get by you, Nance—even if he's a few dollars shy. But of course you're joking—millionaires don't think about working girls like us."

"It might be better for them if they did," said Nancy, with cool wisdom. "Some of us could teach them how to take care of their money."

"If one was to speak to me," laughed Lou, "I know I'd have a duck-fit."

"That's because you don't know any. The only difference between swells and other people is you have to watch 'em closer. Don't you think that red silk lining is just a little bit too bright for that coat, Lou?"

Lou looked at the plain, dull olive jacket of her friend.

"Well, no, I don't—but it may seem so beside that faded-looking thing you've got on."

"This jacket," said Nancy complacently, "has exactly the cut and fit of one that Mrs. Van Alstyne Fisher was wearing the other day. The material cost me $3.98. I suppose hers cost about $100 more."

"Oh, well," said Lou lightly, "it don't strike me as millionaire bait. Shouldn't wonder if I catch one before you do, anyway."

Truly it would have taken a philosopher to decide upon the values of the theories held by the two friends. Lou, lacking that certain

pride and fastidiousness that keeps stores and desks filled with girls working for the barest living, thumped away gaily with her iron in the noisy and stifling laundry. Her wages supported her even beyond the point of comfort ; so that her dress profited until sometimes she cast a sidelong glance of impatience at the neat but inelegant apparel of Dan—Dan the constant, the immutable, the undeviating.

As for Nancy, her case was one of tens of thousands. Silk and jewels and laces and ornaments and the perfume and music of the fine world of good-breeding and taste—these were made for women ; they are her equitable portion. Let her keep near them if they are a part of life to her, and if she will. She is no traitor to herself, as Esau was ; for she keeps her birthright, and the pottage she earns is often very scant.

In this atmosphere Nancy belonged ; and she throve in it and ate her frugal meals and schemed over her cheap dresses with a determined and contented mind. She already knew woman ; and she was studying man, the animal, both as to his habits and eligibility. Some day she would bring down the game that she wanted ; but she promised herself it would be what seemed to her the biggest and the best, and nothing smaller.

Thus she kept her lamp trimmed and burning to receive the bridegroom when he should come.

But, another lesson she learned, perhaps unconsciously. Her standard of values began to shift and change. Sometimes the dollar-mark grew blurred in her mind's eye, and shaped itself into letters that spelled such words as " truth " and " honour " and now and then just " kindness." Let us make a likeness of one who hunts the moose or elk in some mighty wood. He sees a little dell, mossy and embowered, where a rill trickles, babbling to him of rest and comfort. At these times the spear of Nimrod himself grows blunt.

So Nancy wondered sometimes if Persian lamb was always quoted at its market value by the hearts that it covered.

One Thursday evening Nancy left the store and turned across Sixth Avenue westward to the laundry. She was expected to go with Lou and Dan to a musical comedy.

Dan was just coming out of the laundry when she arrived. There was a queer strained look on his face.

" I thought I would drop around to see if they had heard from her," he said.

" Heard from who ? " asked Nancy. " Isn't Lou there ? "

" I thought you knew," said Dan. " She hasn't been here or at the house where she lived since Monday. She moved all her things from there. She told one of the girls in the laundry she might be going to Europe."

" Hasn't anybody seen her anywhere ? " asked Nancy.

Dan looked at her with his jaws set grimly and a steely gleam in his steady grey eyes.

"They told me in the laundry," he said harshly, "that they saw her pass yesterday—in an automobile. With one of the millionaires, I suppose, that you and Lou were for ever busying your brains about."

For the first time Nancy quailed before a man. She laid her hand, that trembled slightly, on Dan's sleeve.

"You've no right to say such a thing to me, Dan—as if I had anything to do with it!"

"I didn't mean it that way," said Dan, softening. He fumbled in his vest pocket.

"I've got the tickets for the show to-night," he said, with a gallant show of lightness. "If you——"

Nancy admired pluck whenever she saw it.

"I'll go with you, Dan," she said.

Three months went by before Nancy saw Lou again.

At twilight one evening the shop-girl was hurrying home along the border of a little quiet park. She heard her name called, and wheeled about in time to catch Lou rushing into her arms.

After the first embrace they drew their heads back as serpents do, ready to attack or to charm, with a thousand questions trembling on their swift tongues. And then Nancy noticed that prosperity had descended upon Lou, manifesting itself in costly furs, flashing gems, and creations of the tailor's art.

"You little fool!" cried Lou, loudly and affectionately. "I see you are still working in that store, and as shabby as ever. And how about that big catch you were going to make—nothing doing yet, I suppose?"

And then Lou looked, and saw that something better than prosperity had descended upon Nancy—something that shone brighter than gems in her eyes and redder than a rose in her cheeks, and that danced like electricity anxious to be loosed from the tip of her tongue.

"Yes, I'm still in the store," said Nancy, "but I'm going to leave it next week. I've made my catch—the biggest catch in the world. You won't mind now, Lou, will you?—I'm going to be married to Dan—to Dan!—he's my Dan now—why, Lou!"

Around the corner of the park strolled one of those new-crop, smooth-faced young policemen that are making the force more endurable—at least to the eye. He saw a woman with an expensive fur coat and diamond-ringed hands crouching down against the iron fence of the park, sobbing turbulently, while a slender, plainly dressed working girl leaned close, trying to console her. But the Gibsonian cop, being of the new order, passed on, pretending not to notice, for he was wise enough to know that these matters are beyond help, so far as the power he represents is concerned, though he rap the pavement with his nightstick till the sound goes up to the furthermost stars.

THE LAST OF THE TROUBADOURS

"O. HENRY"

INEXORABLY Sam Galloway saddled his pony. He was going away from the Rancho Altito at the end of a three-months' visit. It is not to be expected that a guest should put up with wheat coffee and biscuits yellow-streaked with saleratus for longer than that. Nick Napoleon, the big Negro man cook, had never been able to make good biscuits. Once before, when Nick was cooking at the Willow Ranch, Sam had been forced to fly from his *cuisine,* after only a six-weeks' sojourn.

On Sam's face was an expression of sorrow, deepened with regret and slightly tempered by the patient forgiveness of a connoisseur who cannot be understood. But very firmly and inexorably he buckled his saddle-cinches, looped his stake-rope and hung it to his saddle-horn, tied his slicker and coat on the cantle, and looped his quirt on his right wrist. The Merrydews (householders of the Rancho Altito), men, women, children, and servants, vassals, visitors, employés, dogs, and casual callers were grouped in the "gallery" of the ranch house, all with faces set to the tune of melancholy and grief. For, as the coming of Sam Galloway to any ranch, camp, or cabin between the rivers Frio and Bravo del Norte aroused joy, so his departure caused mourning and distress.

And then, during absolute silence, except for the bumping of a hind elbow of a hound dog as he pursued a wicked flea, Sam tenderly and carefully tied his guitar across his saddle on top of his slicker and coat. The guitar was in a green duck bag; and if you catch the significance of it, it explains Sam.

Sam Galloway was the Last of the Troubadours. Of course you know about the troubadours. The encyclopædia says they flourished between the eleventh and the thirteenth centuries. What they flourished doesn't seem clear—you may be pretty sure it wasn't a sword: maybe it was a fiddlebow, or a forkful of spaghetti, or a lady's scarf. Anyhow, Sam Galloway was one of 'em.

Sam put on a martyred expression as he mounted his pony. But the expression on his face was hilarious compared with the one on his pony's. You see, a pony gets to know his rider mighty well, and it is not unlikely that cow ponies in pastures and at hitching racks

had often guyed Sam's pony for being ridden by a guitar player instead of a rollicking, cussing, all-wool cowboy. No man is a hero to his saddle-horse. And even an escalator in a department store might be excused for tripping up a troubadour.

Oh, I know I'm one ; and so are you. You remember the stories you memorise and the card tricks you study and that little piece on the piano—how does it go ?—ti-tum-te-tum-ti-tum—those little Arabian Ten Minute Entertainments that you furnish when you go up to call on your rich Aunt Jane. You should know that *omnæ personæ in tres partes divisæ sunt*, namely : Barons, Troubadours, and Workers. Barons have no inclination to read such folderol as this ; and Workers have no time : so I know you must be a Troubadour, and that you will understand Sam Galloway. Whether we sing, act, dance, write, lecture, or paint, we are only troubadours ; so let us make the worst of it.

The pony with the Dante Alighieri face, guided by the pressure of Sam's knees, bore that wandering minstrel sixteen miles south-eastward. Nature was in her most benignant mood. League after league of delicate, sweet flowerets made fragrant the gently undulating prairie. The east wind tempered the spring warmth ; wool-white clouds flying in from the Mexican Gulf hindered the direct rays of the April sun. Sam sang songs as he rode. Under his pony's bridle he had tucked some sprigs of chaparral to keep away the deer flies. Thus crowned, the long-faced quadruped looked more Dantesque than before, and, judging by his countenance, seemed to think of Beatrice.

Straight as topography permitted, Sam rode to the sheep ranch of old man Ellison. A visit to a sheep ranch seemed to him desirable just then. There had been too many people, too much noise, argument, competition, confusion, at Rancho Altito. He had never conferred upon old man Ellison the favour of sojourning at his ranch ; but he knew he would be welcome. The troubadour is his own passport everywhere. The Workers in the castle let down the drawbridge to him, and the Baron sets him at his left hand at table in the banquet hall. There ladies smile upon him and applaud his songs and stories, while the Workers bring boars' heads and flagons. If the Baron nods once or twice in his carved oaken chair, he does not do it maliciously.

Old man Ellison welcomed the troubadour flatteringly. He had often heard praises of Sam Galloway from other ranchmen who had been complimented by his visits, but had never aspired to such an honour for his own humble barony. I say barony because old man Ellison was the Last of the Barons. Of course, Bulwer-Lytton lived too early to know him, or he wouldn't have conferred that soubriquet upon Warwick. In life it is the duty and the function of the Baron to provide work for the Workers and lodging and shelter for the Troubadours.

Old man Ellison was a shrunken old man, with a short, yellow-white beard and a face lined and seamed by past-and-gone smiles. His ranch was a little two-room box house in a grove of hackberry trees in the lonesomest part of the sheep country. His household consisted of a Kiowa Indian man cook, four hounds, a pet sheep, and a half-tamed coyote chained to a fence-post. He owned 3000 sheep, which he ran on two sections of leased land and many thousands of acres neither leased nor owned. Three or four times a year some one who spoke his language would ride up to his gate and exchange a few bald ideas with him. Those were red-letter days to old man Ellison. Then in what illuminated, embossed, and gorgeously decorated capitals must have been written the day on which a troubadour—a troubadour who, according to the encyclopædia, should have flourished between the eleventh and the thirteenth centuries—drew rein at the gates of his baronial castle!

Old man Ellison's smiles came back and filled his wrinkles when he saw Sam. He hurried out of the house in his shuffling, limping way to greet him.

"Hello, Mr. Ellison," called Sam cheerfully. "Thought I'd drop over and see you awhile. Notice you've had fine rains on your range. They ought to make good grazing for your spring lambs."

"Well, well, well," said old man Ellison. "I'm mighty glad to see you, Sam. I never thought you'd take the trouble to ride over to as out-of-the-way an old ranch as this. But you're mighty welcome. 'Light. I've got a sack of new oats in the kitchen—shall I bring out a feed for your hoss?"

"Oats for him?" said Sam derisively. "No, sir-ee. He's as fat as a pig now on grass. He don't get rode enough to keep him in condition. I'll just turn him in the horse pasture with a drag rope on if you don't mind."

I am positive that never during the eleventh and thirteenth centuries did Baron, Troubadour, and Worker amalgamate as harmoniously as their parallels did that evening at old man Ellison's sheep ranch. The Kiowa's biscuits were light and tasty and his coffee strong. Ineradicable hospitality and appreciation glowed on old man Ellison's weather-tanned face. As for the troubadour, he said to himself that he had stumbled upon pleasant places indeed. A well-cooked, abundant meal, a host whom his lightest attempt to entertain seemed to delight far beyond the merits of the exertion, and the reposeful atmosphere that his sensitive soul at that time craved united to confer upon him a satisfaction and luxurious ease that he had seldom found on his tours of the ranches.

After the delectable supper, Sam untied the green duck bag and took out his guitar. Not by way of payment, mind you—neither Sam Galloway nor any other of the true troubadours are lineal descendants of the late Tommy Tucker. You have read of Tommy Tucker in the works of the esteemed but often obscure

Mother Goose. Tommy Tucker sang for his supper. No true troubadour would do that. He would have his supper, and then sing for Art's sake.

Sam Galloway's repertoire comprised about fifty funny stories and between thirty and forty songs. He by no means stopped there. He could talk through twenty cigarettes on any topic that you brought up. And he never sat up when he could lie down; and never stood when he could sit. I am strongly disposed to linger with him, for I am drawing a portrait as well as a blunt pencil and a tattered thesaurus will allow.

I wish you could have seen him: he was small and tough and inactive beyond the power of imagination to conceive. He wore an ultramarine-blue woollen shirt laced down the front with a pearl-grey, exaggerated sort of shoe-string, indestructible brown duck clothes, inevitable high-heeled boots with Mexican spurs, and a Mexican straw sombrero.

That evening Sam and old man Ellison dragged their chairs out under the hackberry trees. They lighted cigarettes; and the troubadour gaily touched his guitar. Many of the songs he sang were the weird, melancholy, minor-keyed *canciones* that he had learned from the Mexican sheep herders and *vaqueros*. One, in particular, charmed and soothed the soul of the lonely baron. It was a favourite song of the sheep herders, beginning "*Huile, huile, palomita*," which being translated means, "Fly, fly, little dove." Sam sang it for old man Ellison many times that evening.

The troubadour stayed on at the old man's ranch. There was peace and quiet and appreciation there, such as he had not found in the noisy camps of the cattle kings. No audience in the world could have crowned the work of poet, musician, or artist with more worshipful and unflagging approval than that bestowed upon his efforts by old man Ellison. No visit by a royal personage to a humble woodchopper or peasant could have been received with more flattering thankfulness and joy.

On a cool, canvas-covered cot in the shade of the hackberry trees Sam Galloway passed the greater part of his time. There he rolled his brown paper cigarettes, read such tedious literature as the ranch afforded, and added to his repertoire of improvisations that he played so expertly on his guitar. To him, as a slave ministering to a great lord, the Kiowa brought cool water from the red jar hanging under the brush shelter, and food when he called for it. The prairie zephyrs fanned him mildly; mocking-birds at morn and eve competed with but scarce equalled the sweet melodies of his lyre; a perfumed stillness seemed to fill all his world. While old man Ellison was pottering among his flocks of sheep on his mile-an-hour pony, and while the Kiowa took his siesta in the burning sunshine at the end of the kitchen, Sam would lie on his cot thinking what a happy world he lived in, and how kind it is to the ones whose

mission in life it is to give entertainment and pleasure. Here he had food and lodging as good as he had ever longed for; absolute immunity from care or exertion or strife; an endless welcome, and a host whose delight at the sixteenth repetition of a song or a story was as keen as at its initial giving. Was there ever a troubadour of old who struck upon as royal a castle in his wanderings? While he lay thus, meditating upon his blessings, little brown cottontails would shyly frolic through the yard; a covey of white-topknotted blue quail would run past, in single file, twenty yards away; a *paisano* bird, out hunting for tarantulas, would hop upon the fence and salute him with sweeping flourishes of its long tail. In the eighty-acre horse pasture the pony with the Dantesque face grew fat and almost smiling. The troubadour was at the end of his wanderings.

Old man Ellison was his own *vaciero*. That means that he supplied his sheep camps with wood, water, and rations by his own labours instead of hiring a *vaciero*. On small ranches it is often done. One morning he started for the camp of Incarnación Felipe de la Cruz y Monte Piedras (one of his sheep herders) with the week's usual rations of brown beans, coffee, meal, and sugar. Two miles away on the trail from old Fort Ewing, he met, face to face, a terrible being called King James, mounted on a fiery, prancing, Kentucky-bred horse. King James's real name was James King; but people reversed it because it seemed to fit him better, and also because it seemed to please his majesty. King James was the biggest cattleman between the Alamo plaza in San Antone and Bill Hopper's saloon in Brownsville. Also he was the loudest and most offensive bully and braggart and bad man in south-west Texas. And he always made good whenever he bragged; and the more noise he made the more dangerous he was. In the story papers it is always the quiet, mild-mannered man with light-blue eyes and a low voice who turns out to be really dangerous; but in real life and in this story such is not the case. Give me my choice between assaulting a large, loud-mouthed rough-houser and an inoffensive stranger with blue eyes sitting quietly in a corner, and you will see something doing in the corner every time.

King James, as I intended to say earlier, was a fierce, two-hundred-pound, sunburned, blond man, as pink as an October strawberry, and with two horizontal slits under shaggy red eyebrows for eyes. On that day he wore a flannel shirt that was tan-coloured, with the exception of certain large areas which were darkened by transudations due to the summer sun. There seemed to be other clothing and garnishings about him, such as brown duck trousers stuffed into immense boots, and red handkerchiefs and revolvers; and a shot-gun laid across his saddle and a leather belt with millions of cartridges shining in it—but your mind skidded off such accessories; what held your gaze was just the two little horizontal slits that he used for eyes.

This was the man that old man Ellison met on the trail; and when you count up in the baron's favour that he was sixty-five and weighed ninety-eight pounds and had heard of King James's record, and that he (the baron) had a hankering for the *vita simplex* and had no gun with him and wouldn't have used it if he had, you can't censure him if I tell you that the smiles with which the troubadour had filled his wrinkles went out of them and left them plain wrinkles again. But he was not the kind of baron that flies from danger. He reined in the mile-an-hour pony (no difficult feat) and saluted the formidable monarch.

King James expressed himself with royal directness.

"You're that old snoozer that's running sheep on this range, ain't you?" said he. "What right have you got to do it? Do you own any land, or lease any?"

"I have two sections leased from the state," said old man Ellison mildly.

"Not by no means you haven't," said King James. "Your lease expired yesterday; and I had a man at the land office on the minute to take it up. You don't control a foot of grass in Texas. You sheep men have got to git. Your time's up. It's a cattle country, and there ain't any room in it for snoozers. This range you've got your sheep on is mine. I'm putting up a wire fence, forty by sixty miles; and if there's a sheep inside of it when it's done it'll be a dead one. I'll give you a week to move yours away. If they ain't gone by then, I'll send six men over here with Winchesters to make mutton out of the whole lot. And if I find you here at the same time this is what you'll get."

King James patted the breech of his shot-gun warningly.

Old man Ellison rode on to the camp of Incarnación. He sighed many times, and the wrinkles in his face grew deeper. Rumours that the old order was about to change had reached him before. The end of Free Grass was in sight. Other troubles, too, had been accumulating upon his shoulders. His flocks were decreasing instead of growing; the price of wool was declining at every clip; even Bradshaw, the storekeeper at Frio City, at whose store he bought his ranch supplies, was dunning him for his last six months' bill and threatening to cut him off. And so this last greatest calamity suddenly dealt out to him by the terrible King James was a crusher.

When the old man got back to the ranch at sunset he found Sam Galloway lying on his cot, propped against a roll of blankets and wool sacks, fingering his guitar.

"Hello, Uncle Ben," the troubadour called cheerfully. "You rolled in early this evening. I been trying a new twist on the Spanish Fandango to-day. I just about got it. Here's how she goes—listen."

"That's fine, that's mighty fine," said old man Ellison, sitting on the kitchen step and rubbing his white, Scotch-terrier whiskers. "I

reckon you've got all the musicians beat east and west, Sam, as far as the roads are cut out."

"Oh, I don't know," said Sam reflectively. "But I certainly do get there on variations. I guess I can handle anything in five flats about as well as any of 'em. But you look kind of fagged out, Uncle Ben—ain't you feeling right well this evening?"

"Little tired; that's all, Sam. If you ain't played yourself out, let's have that Mexican piece that starts off with '*Huile, huile, palomita.*' It seems that that song always kind of soothes and comforts me after I've been riding far or anything bothers me."

"Why, *seguramente, señor,*" said Sam. "I'll hit her up for you as often as you like. And before I forget about it, Uncle Ben, you want to jerk Bradshaw up about them last hams he sent us. They're just a little bit strong."

A man sixty-five years old, living on a sheep ranch and beset by a complication of disasters, cannot successfully and continuously dissemble. Moreover, a troubadour has eyes quick to see unhappiness in others around him—because it disturbs his own ease. So, on the next day, Sam again questioned the old man about his air of sadness and abstraction. Then old man Ellison told him the story of King James's threats and orders and that pale melancholy and red ruin appeared to have marked him for their own. The troubadour took the news thoughtfully. He had heard much about King James.

On the third day of the seven days of grace allowed him by the autocrat of the range, old man Ellison drove his buckboard to Frio City to fetch some necessary supplies for the ranch. Bradshaw was hard but not implacable. He divided the old man's order by two, and let him have a little more time. One article secured was a new fine ham for the pleasure of the troubadour.

Five miles out of Frio City on his way home the old man met King James riding into town. His majesty could never look anything but fierce and menacing, but to-day his slits of eyes appeared to be a little wider than they usually were.

"Good day," said the king gruffly. "I've been wanting to see you. I hear it said by a cowman from Sandy yesterday that you was from Jackson County, Mississippi, originally. I want to know if that's a fact."

"Born there," said old man Ellison, "and raised there till I was twenty-one."

"This man says." went on King James, "that he thinks you was related to the Jackson County Reeveses. Was he right?"

"Aunt Caroline Reeves," said the old man, "was my half-sister."

"She was my aunt," said King James. "I run away from home when I was sixteen. Now let's re-talk over some things that we discussed a few days ago. They call me a bad man; and they're only half right. There's plenty of room in my pasture for your

bunch of sheep and their increase for a long time to come. Aunt Caroline used to cut out sheep in cake dough and bake 'em for me. You keep your sheep where they are, and use all the range you want. How's your finances?" The old man related his woes in detail, dignifiedly, with restraint and candour.

"She used to smuggle extra grub into my school basket—I'm speaking of Aunt Caroline," said King James. "I'm going over to Frio City to-day, and I'll ride back by your ranch to-morrow. I'll draw $2000 out of the bank there and bring it over to you; and I'll tell Bradshaw to let you have everything you want on credit. You are bound to have heard the old saying at home, that the Jackson County Reeveses and Kings would stick closer by each other than chestnut burrs. Well, I'm a King yet whenever I run across a Reeves. So you look out for me along about sundown to-morrow, and don't worry about nothing. Shouldn't wonder if the dry spell don't kill out the young grass."

Old man Ellison drove happily ranchward. Once more the smiles filled out his wrinkles. Very suddenly, by the magic of kinship and the good that lies somewhere in all hearts, his troubles had been removed.

On reaching the ranch he found that Sam Galloway was not there. His guitar hung by its buckskin string to a hackberry limb, moaning as the gulf breeze blew across its masterless strings.

The Kiowa endeavoured to explain. "Sam, he catch pony," said he, "and say he ride to Frio City. What for no can damn sabe. Say he come back to-night. Maybe so. That all."

As the first stars came out the troubadour rode back to his haven. He pastured his pony and went into the house, his spurs jingling martially.

Old man Ellison sat at the kitchen table, having a tin cup of before-supper coffee. He looked contented and pleased.

"Hello, Sam," said he, "I'm darned glad to see ye back. I don't know how I managed to get along on this ranch, anyhow, before ye dropped in to cheer things up. I'll bet ye've been skylarking around with some of them Frio City gals, now, that's kept ye so late."

And then old man Ellison took another look at Sam's face and saw that the minstrel had changed to the man of action.

And while Sam is unbuckling from his waist old man Ellison's six-shooter, that the latter had left behind him when he drove to town, we may well pause to remark that anywhere and whenever a troubadour lays down the guitar and takes up the sword trouble is sure to follow. It is not the expert thrust of Athos nor the cold skill of Aramis nor the iron wrist of Porthos that we have to fear—it is the Gascon's fury—the wild and unacademic attack of the troubadour—the sword of D'Artagnan.

"I done it," said Sam. "I went over to Frio City to do it. I couldn't let him put the skibunk on you, Uncle Ben. I met him in Summer's saloon. I knowed what to do. I said a few things to him that nobody else heard. He reached for his gun first—half-a-

dozen fellows saw him do it—but I got mine unlimbered first. Three doses I gave him—right around the lungs, and a saucer could have covered up all of 'em. He won't bother you no more."

"This—is—King—James—you speak—of?" asked old man Ellison, while he sipped his coffee.

"You bet it was. And they took me before the county judge; and the witnesses what saw him draw his gun first was all there. Well, of course, they put me under $300 bond to appear before the court, but there was four or five boys on the spot ready to sign the bail. He won't bother you no more, Uncle Ben. You ought to have seen how close them bullet holes was together. I reckon playing a guitar as much as I do must kind of limber a fellow's trigger finger up a little, don't you think, Uncle Ben?"

Then there was a little silence in the castle except for the spluttering of a venison steak that the Kiowa was cooking.

"Sam," said old man Ellison, stroking his white whiskers with a tremulous hand," would you mind getting the guitar and playing that '*Huile, huile, palomita,*' piece once or twice? It always seems to be kind of soothing and comforting when a man's tired and fagged out."

There is no more to be said, except that the title of the story is wrong. It should have been called "The Last of the Barons." There never will be an end to the troubadours; and now and then it does seem that the jingle of their guitars will drown the sound of the muffled blows of the pickaxes and trip-hammers of all the Workers in the world.

THE PASSING OF BLACK EAGLE

"O. HENRY"

FOR some months of a certain year a grim bandit infested the Texas border along the Rio Grande. Peculiarly striking to the optic nerve was this notorious marauder. His personality secured him the title of "Black Eagle, the Terror of the Border." Many fearsome tales are on record concerning the doings of him and his followers. Suddenly, in the space of a single minute, Black Eagle vanished from earth. He was never heard of again. His own band never even guessed the mystery of his disappearance. The border ranches and settlements feared he would come again to ride and ravage the mesquite flats. He never will. It is to disclose the fate of Black Eagle that this narrative is written.

The initial movement of the story is furnished by the foot of a

bar-tender in St. Louis. His discerning eye fell upon the form of Chicken Ruggles as he pecked with avidity at the free lunch. Chicken was a "hobo." He had a long nose like the bill of a fowl, an inordinate appetite for poultry, and a habit of gratifying it without expense which accounts for the name given him by his fellow-vagrants.

Physicians agree that the partaking of liquids at meal times is not a healthy practice. The hygiene of the saloon promulgates the opposite. Chicken had neglected to purchase a drink to accompany his meal. The bar-tender rounded the counter, caught the injudicious diner by the ear with a lemon squeezer, led him to the door and kicked him into the street.

Thus the mind of Chicken was brought to realise the signs of coming winter. The night was cold; the stars shone with unkindly brilliancy; people were hurrying along the streets in two egotistic, jostling streams. Men had donned their overcoats, and Chicken knew to an exact percentage the increased difficulty of coaxing dimes from those buttoned-in best pockets. The time had come for his annual exodus to the south.

A little boy, five or six years old, stood looking with covetous eyes in a confectioner's window. In one small hand he held an empty two-ounce vial; in the other he grasped tightly something flat and round, with a shining milled edge. The scene presented a field of operations commensurate to Chicken's talents and daring. After sweeping the horizon to make sure that no official tug was cruising near, he insidiously accosted his prey. The boy, having been early taught by his household to regard altruistic advances with extreme suspicion, received the overtures coldly.

Then Chicken knew that he must make one of those desperate, nerve-shattering plunges into speculation that fortune sometimes requires of those who would win her favour. Five cents was his capital, and this he must risk against the chance of winning what lay within the close grasp of the youngster's chubby hand. It was a fearful lottery, Chicken knew. But he must accomplish his ends by strategy, since he had a wholesome terror of plundering infants by force. Once, in a park, driven by hunger, he had committed an onslaught upon a bottle of peptonised infant's food in the possession of an occupant of a baby carriage. The outraged infant had so promptly opened its mouth and pressed the button that communicated with the welkin that help arrived, and Chicken did his thirty days in a snug coop. Wherefore he was, as he said, "leary of kids."

Beginning artfully to question the boy concerning his choice of sweets, he gradually drew out the information he wanted. Mamma said he was to ask the drug-store man for ten cents' worth of paregoric in the bottle; he was to keep his hand shut tight over the dollar; he must not stop to talk to anyone in the street; he must ask the drug-store man to wrap up the change and put it in the

pocket of his trousers. Indeed, they had pockets—two of them! And he liked chocolate creams best.

Chicken went into the store and turned plunger. He invested his entire capital in C. A. N. D. Y. stocks, simply to pave the way to the greater risk following.

He gave the sweets to the youngster, and had the satisfaction of perceiving that confidence was established. After that it was easy to obtain leadership of the expedition; to take the investment by the hand and lead it to a nice drug store he knew of in the same block. There Chicken, with a parental air, passed over the dollar and called for the medicine, while the boy crunched his candy, glad to be relieved of the responsibility of the purchase. And then the successful investor, searching his pockets, found an overcoat button—the extent of his winter trousseau—and, wrapping it carefully, placed the ostensible change in the pocket of confiding juvenility. Setting the youngster's face homeward, and patting him benevolently on the back—for Chicken's heart was as soft as those of his feathered namesakes—the speculator quit the market with a profit of 1700 per cent on his invested capital.

Two hours later an Iron Mountain freight engine pulled out of the railroad yards, Texas bound, with a string of empties. In one of the cattle cars, half buried in excelsior, Chicken lay at ease. Beside him in his nest was a quart bottle of very poor whisky and a paper bag of bread and cheese. Mr. Ruggles, in his private car, was on his trip south for the winter season.

For a week that car was trundled southward, shifted, laid over, and manipulated after the manner of rolling stock, but Chicken stuck to it, leaving it only at necessary times to satisfy his hunger and thirst. He knew it must go down to the cattle country, and San Antonio, in the heart of it, was his goal. There the air was salubrious and mild; the people indulgent and long-suffering. The bar-tenders there would not kick him. If he should eat too long or too often at one place they would swear at him as if by rote and without heat. They swore so drawlingly, and they rarely paused short of their full vocabulary, which was copious, so that Chicken had often gulped a good meal during the process of the vituperative prohibition. The season there was always spring-like; the plazas were pleasant at night, with music and gaiety; except during the slight and infrequent cold snaps one could sleep comfortably out of doors in case the interiors should develop inhospitality.

At Texarkana his car was switched to the I. and G. N. Then still southward it trailed until, at length, it crawled across the Colorado bridge at Austin, and lined out, straight as an arrow, for the run to San Antonio.

When the freight halted at that town Chicken was fast asleep. In ten minutes the train was off again for Laredo, the end of the road. Those empty cattle cars were for distribution along the line

at points from which the ranches shipped their stock.

When Chicken awoke his car was stationary. Looking out between the slats he saw it was a bright, moonlit night. Scrambling out, he saw his car with three others abandoned on a little siding in a wild and lonesome country. A cattle pen and chute stood on one side of the track. The railroad bisected a vast, dim ocean of prairie, in the midst of which Chicken, with his futile rolling stock, was as completely stranded as was Robinson with his land-locked boat.

A white post stood near the rails. Going up to it, Chicken read the letters at the top, S. A. 90. Laredo was nearly as far to the south. He was almost a hundred miles from any town. Coyotes began to yelp in the mysterious sea around him. Chicken felt lonesome. He had lived in Boston without an education, in Chicago without nerve, in Philadelphia without a sleeping place, in New York without a pull, and in Pittsburg sober, and yet he had never felt so lonely as now.

Suddenly through the intense silence he heard the whicker of a horse. The sound came from the side of the track toward the east, and Chicken began to explore timorously in that direction. He stepped high along the mat of curly mesquit grass, for he was afraid of everything there might be in this wilderness—snakes, rats, brigands, centipedes, mirages, cowboys, fandangoes, tarantulas, tamales—he had read of them in the story papers. Rounding a clump of prickly pear that reared high its fantastic and menacing array of rounded heads, he was struck to shivering terror by a snort and a thunderous plunge, as the horse, himself startled, bounded away some fifty yards, and then resumed his grazing. But here was the one thing in the desert that Chicken did not fear. He had been reared on a farm; he had handled horses, understood them, and could ride.

Approaching slowly and speaking soothingly, he followed the animal, which, after its first flight, seemed gentle enough, and secured the end of the twenty-foot lariat that dragged after him in the grass. It required him but a few moments to contrive the rope into an ingenious nose-bridle, after the style of the Mexican *borsal*. In another he was upon the horse's back and off at a splendid lope, giving the animal free choice of direction. " He will take me somewhere," said Chicken to himself.

It would have been a thing of joy, that untrammelled gallop over the moonlit prairie, even to Chicken, who loathed exertion, but that his mood was not for it. His head ached; a growing thirst was upon him; the " somewhere " whither his lucky mount might convey him was full of dismal peradventure.

And now he noted that the horse moved to a definite goal. Where the prairie lay smooth he lept his course straight as an arrow's toward the east. Deflected by hill or arroyo or impracticable spinous brakes, he quickly flowed again into the current, charted by his unerring instinct. At last, upon the side of a gentle rise, he

suddenly subsided to a complacent walk. A stone's cast away stood a little mott of coma trees; beneath it a *jacal* such as the Mexicans erect—a one-room house of upright poles daubed with clay and roofed with grass or tule reeds. An experienced eye would have estimated the spot as the headquarters of a small sheep ranch. In the moonlight the ground in the near-by corral showed pulverised to a level smoothness by the hoofs of the sheep. Everywhere was carelessly distributed the paraphernalia of the place—ropes, bridles, saddles, sheep pelts, wool sacks, feed troughs, and camp litter. The barrel of drinking water stood in the end of the two-horse wagon near the door. The harness was piled, promiscuous, upon the wagon tongue, soaking up the dew.

Chicken slipped to earth, and tied the horse to a tree. He halloed again and again, but the house remained quiet. The door stood open, and he entered cautiously. The light was sufficient for him to see that no one was at home. He struck a match and lighted a lamp that stood on a table. The room was that of a bachelor ranchman who was content with the necessaries of life. Chicken rummaged intelligently until he found what he had hardly dared hope for—a small brown jug that still contained something near a quart of his desire.

Half an hour later, Chicken—now a gamecock of hostile aspect—emerged from the house with unsteady steps. He had drawn upon the absent ranchman's equipment to replace his own ragged attire. He wore a suit of coarse brown ducking, the coat being a sort of rakish bolero, jaunty to a degree. Boots he had donned, and spurs that whirred with every lurching step. Buckled around him was a belt full of cartridges with a big six-shooter in each of its two holsters. Prowling about, he found blankets, a saddle and bridle with which he caparisoned his steed. Again mounting, he rode swiftly away, singing a loud and tuneless song.

Bud King's band of desperadoes, outlaws, and horse and cattle thieves were in camp at a secluded spot on the bank of the Frio. Their depredations in the Rio Grande country, while no bolder than usual, had been advertised more extensively, and Captain Kinney's company of rangers had been ordered down to look after them. Consequently, Bud King, who was a wise general, instead of cutting out a hot trail for the upholders of the law, as his men wished to do, retired for the time to the prickly fastnesses of the Frio valley.

Though the move was a prudent one, and not incompatible with Bud's well-known courage, it raised dissension among the members of the band. In fact, while they thus lay ingloriously *perdu* in the brush, the question of Bud King's fitness for the leadership was argued, with closed doors, as it were, by his followers. Never before had Bud's skill or efficiency been brought to criticism; but his glory was waning (and such is glory's fate) in the light of a newer star. The sentiment of the band was crystallising into the opinion that Black

Eagle could lead them with more lustre, profit, and distinction.

This Black Eagle—sub-titled the " Terror of the Border "—had been a member of the gang about three months.

One night while they were in camp on the San Miguel water-hole a solitary horseman on the regulation fiery steed dashed in among them. The newcomer was of a portentous and devastating aspect. A beak-like nose with a predatory curve projected above a mass of bristling, blue-black whiskers. His eye was cavernous and fierce. He was spurred, sombreroed, booted, garnished with revolvers, abundantly drunk, and very much unafraid. Few people in the country drained by the Rio Bravo would have cared thus to invade alone the camp of Bud King. But this fell bird swooped fearlessly upon them and demanded to be fed.

Hospitality in the prairie country is not limited. Even if your enemy pass your way you must feed him before you shoot him. You must empty your larder into him before you empty your lead. So the stranger of undeclared intentions was set down to a mighty feast.

A talkative bird he was, full of most marvellous loud tales and exploits, and speaking a language at times obscure but never colourless. He was a new sensation to Bud King's men, who rarely encountered new types. They hung, delighted, upon his vainglorious boasting, the spicy strangeness of his lingo, his contemptuous familiarity with life, the world, and remote places, and the extravagant frankness with which he conveyed his sentiments.

To their guest the band of outlaws seemed to be nothing more than a congregation of country bumpkins whom he was " stringing for grub " just as he would have told his stories at the back door of a farmhouse to wheedle a meal. And, indeed, his ignorance was not without excuse, for the " bad man " of the South-west does not run to extremes. Those brigands might justly have been taken for a little party of peaceable rustics assembled for a fish-fry or pecan gathering. Gentle of manner, slouching of gait, soft-voiced, unpicturesquely clothed ; not one of them presented to the eye any witness of the desperate records they had earned.

For two days the glittering stranger within the camp was feasted. Then, by common consent, he was invited to become a member of the band. He consented, presenting for enrolment the prodigious name of " Captain Montressor." This name was immediately overruled by the band, and " Piggy " substituted as a compliment to the awful and insatiate appetite of its owner.

Thus did the Texas border receive the most spectacular brigand that ever rode its chaparral.

For the next three months Bud King conducted business as usual, escaping encounters with law officers and being content with reasonable profits. The band ran off some very good companies of horses from the ranges, and a few bunches of fine cattle which they got safely across the Rio Grande and disposed of to fair advantage.

Often the band would ride into the little villages and Mexican settlements, terrorising the inhabitants and plundering for the provisions and ammunition they needed. It was during these bloodless raids that Piggy's ferocious aspect and frightful voice gained him a renown more widespread and glorious than those other gentle-voiced and sad-faced desperadoes could have acquired in a lifetime.

The Mexicans, most apt in nomenclature, first called him The Black Eagle, and used to frighten the babes by threatening them with tales of the dreadful robber who carried off little children in his great beak. Soon the name extended, and Black Eagle, the Terror of the Border, became a recognised factor in exaggerated newspaper reports and ranch gossip.

The country from the Nueces to the Rio Grande was a wild but fertile stretch, given over to the sheep and cattle ranches. Range was free ; the inhabitants were few ; the law was mainly a letter, and the pirates met with little opposition until the flaunting and garish Piggy gave the band undue advertisement. Then McKinney's ranger company headed for those precincts, and Bud King knew that it meant grim and sudden war or else temporary retirement. Regarding the risk to be unnecessary, he drew off his band to an almost inaccessible spot on the bank of the Frio. Wherefore, as has been said, dissatisfaction arose among the members, and impeachment proceedings against Bud were premeditated, with Black Eagle in high favour for the succession. Bud King was not unaware of the sentiment, and he called aside Cactus Taylor, his trusted lieutenant, to discuss it.

" If the boys," said Bud, " ain't satisfied with me, I'm willin' to step out. They're buckin' against my way of handlin' 'em. And 'specially because I concludes to hit the brush while Sam Kinney is ridin' the line. I saves 'em from bein' shot or sent up on a state contract, and they up and says I'm no good."

" It ain's so much that," explained Cactus, " as it is they're plum locoed about Piggy. They want them whiskers and that nose of his to split the wind at the head of the column."

" There's somethin' mighty seldom about Piggy," declared Bud musingly. " I never yet see anything on the hoof that he exactly grades up with. He can shore holler a plenty, and he straddles a hoss from where you laid the chunk. But he ain't never been smoked yet. You know, Cactus, we ain't had a row since he's been with us. Piggy's all right for skearin' the greaser kids and layin' waste a cross-roads store. I reckon he's the finest canned oyster buccaneer and cheese pirate that ever was, but how's his appetite for fightin' ? I've knowed some citizens you'd think was starvin' for trouble get a bad case of dyspepsy the first dose of lead they had to take."

" He talks all spraddled out," said Cactus, " 'bout the rookuses he's been in. He claims to have saw the elephant and hearn the owl."

"I know," replied Bud, using the cowpuncher's expressive phrase of scepticism, "but it sounds to me!"

This conversation was held one night in camp while the other members of the band—eight in number—were sprawling around the fire, lingering over their supper. When Bud and Cactus ceased talking they heard Piggy's formidable voice holding forth to the others as usual while he was engaged in checking, though never satisfying, his ravening appetite.

"Wat's de use," he was saying, "of chasin' little red cowses and hosses 'round for t'ousands of miles? Dere ain't nuttin' in it. Gallopin' t'rough dese bushes and briers, and gettin' a t'irst dat a brewery could't put out, and missin' meals! Say! You know what I'd do if I was main finger of dis bunch? I'd stick up a train. I'd blow de express car and make hard dollars where you guys gets wind. Youse makes me tired. Dis sook-cow kind of cheap sport gives me a pain."

Later on, a deputation waited on Bud. They stood on one leg, chewed mesquit twigs and circumlocuted, for they hated to hurt his feelings. Bud foresaw their business, and made it easy for them. Bigger risks and larger profits was what they wanted.

The suggestion of Piggy's about holding up a train had fired their imagination and increased their admiration for the dash and boldness of the instigator. They were such simple, artless, and custom-bound bushrangers that they had never before thought of extending their habits beyond the running off of live-stock and the shooting of such of their acquaintances as ventured to interfere.

Bud acted "on the level," agreeing to take a subordinate place in the gang until Black Eagle should have been given a trial as leader.

After a great deal of consultation, studying of time-tables, and discussion of the country's topography, the time and place for carrying out their new enterprise was decided upon. At that time there was a feedstuff famine in Mexico and a cattle famine in certain parts of the United States, and there was a brisk international trade. Much money was being shipped along the railroads that connected the two republics. It was agreed that the most promising place for the contemplated robbery was at Espina, a little station on the I. and G. N., about forty miles north of Laredo. The train stopped there one minute; the country around was wild and unsettled; the station consisted of but one house in which the agent lived.

Black Eagle's band set out, riding by night. Arriving in the vicinity of Espina they rested their horses all day in a thicket a few miles distant. The train was due at Espina at 10.30 P.M. They could rob the train and be well over the Mexican border with their booty by daylight the next morning.

To do Black Eagle justice, he exhibited no signs of flinching from the responsible honours that had been conferred upon him.

He assigned his men to their respective posts with discretion, and coached them carefully as to their duties. On each side of the track four of the band were to lie concealed in the chaparral. Gotch-Ear Rodgers was to stick up the station agent. Bronco Charlie was to remain with the horses, holding them in readiness. At a spot where it was calculated the engine would be when the train stopped, Bud King was to lie hidden on one side, Black Eagle himself on the other. The two would get the drop on the engineer and fireman, force them to descend and proceed to the rear. Then the express car would be looted, and the escape made. No one was to move until Black Eagle gave the signal by firing his revolver. The plan was perfect.

At ten minutes to train time every man was at his post, effectually concealed by the thick chaparral that grew almost to the rails. The night was dark and lowering, with a fine drizzle falling from the flying gulf clouds. Black Eagle crouched behind a bush within five yards of the track. Two six-shooters were belted around him. Occasionally he drew a large black bottle from his pocket and raised it to his mouth.

A star appeared far down the track which soon waxed into the headlight of the approaching train. It came on with an increasing roar ; the engine bore down upon the ambushing desperadoes with a glare and a shriek like some avenging monster come to deliver them to justice. Black Eagle flattened himself upon the ground. The engine, contrary to their calculations, instead of stopping between him and Bud King's place of concealment, passed fully forty yards farther before it came to a stand.

The bandit leader rose to his feet and peered around the bush. His men all lay quiet, awaiting the signal. Immediately opposite Black Eagle was a thing that drew his attention. Instead of being a regular passenger train it was a mixed one. Before him stood a box car, the door of which, by some means, had been left slightly open. Black Eagle went up to it and pushed the door farther open. An odour came forth—a damp, rancid, familiar, musty, intoxicating, beloved odour stirring strongly at old memories of happy days and travels. Black Eagle sniffed at the witching smell as the returned wanderer smells of the rose that twines his boyhood's cottage home. Nostalgia seized him. He put his hand inside. Excelsior—dry, springy, curly, soft, enticing, covered the floor. Outside the drizzle had turned to a chilling rain.

The train bell clanged. The bandit chief unbuckled his belt, and cast it, with its revolvers, upon the ground. His spurs followed quickly, and his broad sombrero. Black Eagle was moulting. The train started with a rattling jerk. The ex-Terror of the Border scrambled into the box car and closed the door. Stretched luxuriously upon the excelsior, with the black bottle clasped closely to his breast, his eyes closed, and a foolish, happy smile upon his terrible features, Chicken Ruggles started upon his return trip.

Undisturbed, with the band of desperate bandits lying motionless, awaiting the signal to attack, the train pulled out from Espina. As its speed increased and the black masses of chaparral went whizzing past on either side, the express messenger, lighting his pipe, looked through his window and remarked feelingly :

" What a jim-dandy place for a hold-up ! "

THE FURNISHED ROOM

"O. HENRY"

RESTLESS, shifting, fugacious as time itself is a certain vast bulk of the population of the red brick district of the lower West Side. Homeless, they have a hundred homes. They flit from furnished room to furnished room, transients for ever—transients in abode, transients in heart and mind. They sing " Home, Sweet Home " in ragtime ; they carry their *lares et penates* in a bandbox ; their vine is entwined about a picture hat ; a rubber plant is their fig tree.

Hence the houses of this district, having had a thousand dwellers, should have a thousand tales to tell, mostly dull ones, no doubt ; but it would be strange if there could not be found a ghost or two in the wake of all these vagrant ghosts.

One evening after dark a young man prowled among these crumbling red mansions, ringing their bells. At the twelfth he rested his lean hand-baggage upon the step and wiped the dust from his hat-band and forehead. The bell sounded faint and far away in some remote, hollow depths.

To the door of this, the twelfth house whose bell he had rung, came a housekeeper who made him think of an unwholesome, surfeited worm that had eaten its nut to a hollow shell and now sought to fill the vacancy with edible lodgers.

He asked if there was a room to let.

" Come in," said the housekeeper. Her voice came from her throat ; her throat seemed lined with fur. " I have the third floor back, vacant since a week back. Should you wish to look at it ? "

The young man followed her up the stairs. A faint light from no particular source mitigated the shadows of the halls. They trod noiselessly upon a stair carpet that its own loom would have forsworn. It seemed to have become vegetable ; to have degenerated in that rank, sunless air to lush lichen or spreading moss that grew in patches to the staircase and was viscid under the foot like organic matter. At each turn of the stairs were vacant niches in the wall. Perhaps plants had once been set within them. If so they had died in that foul and tainted air. It may be that statues of the saints had stood

there, but it was not difficult to conceive that imps and devils had dragged them forth in the darkness and down to the unholy depths of some furnished pit below.

"This is the room," said the housekeeper, from her furry throat. "It's a nice room. It ain't often vacant. I had some most elegant people in it last summer—no trouble at all, and paid in advance to the minute. The water's at the end of the hall. Sprowls and Mooney kept it three months. They done a vaudeville sketch. Miss B'retta Sprowls—you may have heard of her—Oh, that was just the stage names—right there over the dresser is where the marriage certificate hung, framed. The gas is here, and you see there is plenty of closet room. It's a room everybody likes. It never stays idle long."

"Do you have many theatrical people rooming here?" asked the young man.

"They comes and goes. A good proportion of my lodgers is connected with the theatres. Yes, sir, this is the theatrical district. Actor people never stays long anywhere. I get my share. Yes, they comes and they goes."

He engaged the room, paying for a week in advance. He was tired, he said, and would take possession at once. He counted out the money. The room had been made ready, she said, even to towels and water. As the housekeeper moved away he put, for the thousandth time, the question that he carried at the end of his tongue.

"A young girl—Miss Vashner—Miss Eloise Vashner—do you remember such a one among your lodgers? She would be singing on the stage, most likely. A fair girl, of medium height and slender, with reddish gold hair and a dark mole near her left eyebrow."

"No, I don't remember the name. Them stage people has names they change as often as their rooms. They comes and they goes. No, I don't call that one to mind."

No. Always no. Five months of ceaseless interrogation and the inevitable negative. So much time spent by day in questioning managers, agents, schools and choruses; by night among the audiences of theatres from all-star casts down to music halls so low that he dreaded to find what he most hoped for. He who had loved her best had tried to find her. He was sure that since her disappearance from home this great water-girt city held her somewhere, but it was like a monstrous quicksand, shifting its particles constantly, with no foundation, its upper granules of to-day buried to-morrow in ooze and slime.

The furnished room received its latest guest with a first glow of pseudo-hospitality, a hectic, haggard, perfunctory welcome like the specious smile of a demirep. The sophistical comfort came in reflected gleams from the decayed furniture, the ragged brocade upholstery of a couch and two chairs, a foot-wide cheap pier-glass between the two windows, from one or two gilt picture frames and a brass bedstead in a corner.

The guest reclined, inert, upon a chair, while the room, confused in speech as though it were an apartment in Babel, tried to discourse to him of its divers tenantry.

A polychromatic rug like some brilliant-flowered, rectangular, tropical islet lay surrounded by a billowy sea of soiled matting. Upon the gay-papered wall were those pictures that pursue the homeless one from house to house—The Huguenot Lovers, The First Quarrel, The Wedding Breakfast, Psyche at the Fountain. The mantel's chastely severe outline was ingloriously veiled behind some pert drapery drawn rakishly askew like the sashes of the Amazonian ballet. Upon it was some desolate flotsam cast aside by the room's marooned when a lucky sail had borne them to a fresh port—a trifling vase or two, pictures of actresses, a medicine bottle, some stray cards out of a deck.

One by one, as the characters of a cryptograph become explicit, the little signs left by the furnished room's procession of guests developed a significance. The threadbare space in the rug in front of the dresser told that lovely woman had marched in the throng. Tiny finger prints on the wall spoke of little prisoners trying to feel their way to sun and air. A splattered strain, raying like the shadow of a bursting bomb, witnessed where a hurled glass or bottle had splintered with its contents against the wall. Across the pier-glass had been scrawled with a diamond in staggering letters the name "Marie." It seemed that the succession of dwellers in the furnished room had turned in fury—perhaps tempted beyond forbearance by its garish coldness—and wreaked upon it their passions. The furniture was chipped and bruised; the couch, distorted by bursting springs, seemed a horrible monster that had been slain during the stress of some grotesque convulsion. Some more potent upheaval had cloven a great slice from the marble mantel. Each plank in the floor owned its particular cant and shriek as from a separate and individual agony. It seemed incredible that all this malice and injury had been wrought upon the room by those who had called it for a time their home; and yet it may have been the cheated home instinct surviving blindly, the resentful rage at false household gods that had kindled their wrath. A hut that is our own we can sweep and adorn and cherish.

The young tenant in the chair allowed these thoughts to file, soft-shod, through his mind, while there drifted into the room furnished sounds and furnished scents. He heard in one room a tittering and incontinent, slack laughter; in others the monologue of a scold, the rattling of dice, a lullaby, and one crying dully; above him a banjo tinkled with spirit. Doors banged somewhere; the elevated trains roared intermittently; a cat yowled miserably upon a back fence. And he breathed the breath of the house—a dank savour rather than a smell—a cold, musty effluvium as from underground vaults mingled with the reeking exhalations of

linoleum and mildewed and rotten woodwork.

Then, suddenly, as he rested there, the room was filled with the strong, sweet odour of mignonette. It came as upon a single buffet of wind with such sureness and fragrance and emphasis that it almost seemed a living visitant. And the man cried aloud, " What, dear ? " as if he had been called, and sprang up and faced about. The rich odour clung to him and wrapped him about. He reached out his arms for it, all his senses for the time confused and commingled. How could one be peremptorily called by an odour ? Surely it must have been a sound. But, was it not the sound that had touched, that had caressed him ?

" She has been in this room," he cried, and he sprang to wrest from it a token, for he knew he would recognise the smallest thing that had belonged to her or that she had touched. This enveloping scent of mignonette, the odour that she had loved and made her own —whence came it ?

The room had been but carelessly set in order. Scattered upon the flimsy dresser scarf were half-a-dozen hairpins—those discreet, indistinguishable friends of womankind, feminine of gender, infinite of mood and uncommunicative of tense. These he ignored, conscious of their triumphant lack of identity. Ransacking the drawers of the dresser he came upon a discarded, tiny, ragged handkerchief. He pressed it to his face. It was racy and insolent with heliotrope ; he hurled it to the floor. In another drawer he found odd buttons, a theatre programme, a pawnbroker's card, two lost marshmallows, a book on the divination of dreams. In the last was a woman's black satin hair-bow, which halted him, poised between ice and fire. But the black satin hair-bow also is femininity's demure, impersonal, common ornament, and tells no tales.

And then he traversed the room like a hound on the scent, skimming the walls, considering the corners of the bulging matting on his hands and knees, rummaging mantel and tables, the curtains and hangings, the drunken cabinet in the corner, for a visible sign, unable to perceive that she was there beside, around, against, within, above him, clinging to him, wooing him, calling him so poignantly through the finer senses that even his grosser ones became cognisant of the call. Once again he answered loudly, " Yes, dear ! " and turned, wild-eyed, to gaze on vacancy, for he could not yet discern form and colour and love and outstretched arms in the odour of mignonette. Oh, God ! whence that odour, and since when have odours had a voice to call ? Thus he groped. He burrowed in crevices and corners, and found corks and cigarettes. These he passed in passive contempt. But once he found in a fold of the matting a half-smoked cigar, and this he ground beneath his heel with a green and trenchant oath. He sifted the room from end to end. He found dreary and ignoble small records of many a peripatetic tenant ; but of her whom he sought, and who may have

lodged there, and whose spirit seemed to hover there, he found no trace. And then he thought of the housekeeper.

He ran from the haunted room downstairs and to a door that showed a crack of light. She came out to his knock. He smothered his excitement as best he could.

" Will you tell me, madam," he besought her, " who occupied the room I have before I came ? "

" Yes, sir. I can tell you again. 'Twas Sprowls and Mooney, as I said. Miss B'retta Sprowls it was in the theatres, but Missis Mooney she was. My house is well known for respectability. The marriage certificate hung, framed, on a nail over——"

" What kind of a lady was Miss Sprowls—in looks, I mean ? "

" Why, black-haired, sir, short, and stout, with a comical face. They left a week ago Tuesday."

" And before they occupied it ? "

" Why, there was a single gentleman connected with the draying business. He left owing me a week. Before him was Missis Crowder and her two children, that stayed four months ; and back of them was old Mr. Doyle, whose sons paid for him. He kept the room six months. That goes back a year, sir, and further I do not remember."

He thanked her and crept back to his room. The room was dead. The essence that had vivified it was gone. The perfume of mignonette had departed. In its place was the old, stale odour of mouldy house furniture, of atmosphere in storage.

The ebbing of his hope drained his faith. He sat staring at the yellow, singing gaslight. Soon he walked to the bed and began to tear the sheets into strips. With the blade of his knife he drove them tightly into every crevice around windows and door. When all was snug and taut he turned out the light, turned the gas full on again, and laid himself gratefully upon the bed.

. . . . . .

It was Mrs. McCool's night to go with the can for beer. So she fetched it and sat with Mrs. Purdy in one of those subterranean retreats where housekeepers forgather and the worm dieth seldom.

" I rented out my third floor back this evening," said Mrs. Purdy, across a fine circle of foam. " A young man took it. He went up to bed two hours ago."

" Now, did ye, Mrs. Purdy, ma'am ? " said Mrs. McCool, with intense admiration. " You do be a wonder for rentin' rooms of that kind. And did ye tell him, then ? " she concluded in a husky whisper, laden with mystery.

" Rooms," said Mrs. Purdy, in her furriest tones, " are furnished for to rent. I did not tell him, Mrs. McCool."

" 'Tis right ye are, ma'am ; 'tis by renting rooms we kape alive. Ye have the rale sense for business, ma'am. There be many people will rayjict the rentin' of a room if they be tould a suicide has been after dyin' in the bed of it."

"As you say, we has our living to be making," remarked Mrs. Purdy.

"Yis, ma'am; 'tis true. 'Tis just one wake ago this day I helped ye lay out the third floor back. A pretty slip of a colleen she was to be killin' herself wid the gas—a swate little face she had, Mrs. Purdy, ma'am."

"She'd a-been called handsome, as you say," said Mrs. Purdy, assenting but critical, "but for that mole she had a-growin' by her left eyebrow. Do fill up your glass again, Mrs. McCool."

THE DEFEAT OF THE CITY

"O. HENRY"

ROBERT WALMSLEY'S descent upon the city resulted in a Kilkenny struggle. He came out of the fight victor by a fortune and a reputation. On the other hand, he was swallowed up by the city. The city gave him what he demanded, and then branded him, with its brand. It remodelled, cut, trimmed and stamped him to the pattern it approves. It opened its social gates to him, and shot him in on a close-cropped, formal lawn with the select herd of ruminants. In dress, habits, manners, provincialism, routine and narrowness, he acquired that charming insolence, that irritating completeness, that sophisticated crassness, that over-balanced poise that makes the Manhattan gentleman so delightfully small in his greatness.

One of the up-state rural counties pointed with pride to the successful young metropolitan lawyer as a product of its soil. Six years earlier this county had removed the wheat straw from between its huckleberry-stained teeth, and emitted a derisive and bucolic laugh as old man Walmsley's freckle-faced "Bob" abandoned the certain three-per-diem meals of the one-horse farm for the discontinuous quick-lunch counters of the three-ringed metropolis. At the end of the six years no murder trial, coaching party, automobile accident or cotillion was complete in which the name of Robert Walmsley did not figure. Tailors waylaid him in the street to get a new wrinkle from the cut of his unwrinkled trousers. Hyphenated fellows in the clubs and members of the oldest sub-pœnaed families were glad to clap him on the back and allow him three letters of his name.

But the Matterhorn of Robert Walmsley's success was not scaled until he married Alicia Van Der Pool. I cite the Matterhorn, for just so high and cool and white and inaccessible was this daughter of the old burghers. The social Alps that ranged about her—over whose bleak passes a thousand climbers struggled—reached only to

her knees. She towered in her own atmosphere, serene, chaste, prideful, wading in no fountains, dining no monkeys, breeding no dogs for bench shows. She was a Van Der Pool. Fountains were made to play for her; monkeys were made for other people's ancestors; dogs, she understood, were created to be companions of blind persons and objectionable characters who smoked pipes.

This was the Matterhorn that Robert Walmsley accomplished. If he found, with the good poet with the game foot and artificially curled hair, that he who ascends to mountain-tops will find the loftiest peaks most wrapped in clouds and snow, he concealed his chilblains beneath a brave and smiling exterior. He was a lucky man and knew it, even though he were imitating the Spartan boy with an ice-cream freezer beneath his doublet frappéeing the region of his heart.

After a brief wedding-tour abroad, the couple returned to create a decided ripple in the calm cistern (so placid and cool and sunless it is) of the best society. They entertained at their red-brick mausoleum of ancient greatness in an old square that is a cemetery of crumbled glory. And Robert Walmsley was proud of his wife; although while one of his hands shook his guests' the other held tightly to his alpenstock and thermometer.

One day Alicia found a letter written to Robert by his mother. It was an unerudite letter, full of crops and motherly love and farm notes. It chronicled the health of the pig and the recent red calf, and asked concerning Robert's in return. It was a letter direct from the soil, straight from home, full of biographies of bees, tales of turnips, pæans of new-laid eggs, neglected parents, and the slump in dried apples.

"Why have I not been shown your mother's letters?" asked Alicia. There was always something in her voice that made you think of lorgnettes, of accounts at Tiffany's, of sledges smoothly gliding on the trail from Dawson to Forty Mile, of the tinkling of pendant prisms on your grandmother's chandeliers, of snow lying on a convent roof; of a police sergeant refusing bail. "Your mother," continued Alicia, "invites us to make a visit to the farm. I have never seen a farm. We will go there for a week or two, Robert."

"We will," said Robert, with the grand air of an associate Supreme Justice concurring in an opinion. "I did not lay the invitation before you because I thought you would not care to go. I am much pleased at your decision."

"I will write to her myself," answered Alicia, with a faint foreshadowing of enthusiasm. "Félice shall pack my trunks at once. Seven, I think, will be enough. I do not suppose that your mother entertains a great deal. Does she give many house parties?"

Robert arose, and as attorney for rural places filed a demurrer against six of the seven trunks. He endeavoured to define, picture, elucidate, set forth, and describe a farm. His own words sounded

strange in his ears. He had not realised how thoroughly urbsidised he had become.

A week passed, and found them landed at the little country station five hours out from the city. A grinning, stentorian, sarcastic youth driving a mule to a spring wagon hailed Robert savagely.

"Hallo, Mr. Walmsley. Found your way back at last, have you? Sorry I couldn't bring in the automobile for you, but dad's bull-tonguing the ten-acre clover patch with it to-day. Guess you'll excuse my not wearing a dress suit over to meet you—it ain't six o'clock yet, you know."

"I'm glad to see you, Tom," said Robert, grasping his brother's hand. "Yes, I've found my way at last. You've a right to say 'at last.' It's been over two years since the last time. But it will be oftener after this, my boy."

Alicia, cool in the summer heat as an Arctic wraith, white as a Norse snow maiden in her flimsy muslin and fluttering lace parasol, came round the corner of the station; and Tom was stripped of his assurance. He became chiefly eyesight clothed in blue jeans, and on the homeward drive to the mule alone did he confide in language the inwardness of his thoughts.

They drove homeward. The low sun dropped a spendthrift flood of gold upon the fortunate fields of wheat. The cities were far away. The road lay curling around wood and dale and hill like a ribbon lost from the robe of careless summer. The wind followed like a whinnying colt in the track of Phœbus's steeds.

By and by the farmhouse peeped grey out of its faithful grove; they saw the long lane with its convoy of walnut trees running from the road to the house; they smelled the wild rose and the breath of cool, damp willows in the creek's bed. And then in unison all the voices of the soil began a chant addressed to the soul of Robert Walmsley. Out of the tilted aisles of the dim wood they came hollowly; they chirped and buzzed from the parched grass; they trilled from the ripples of the creek ford; they floated up in clear Pan's pipe notes from the dimming meadows; the whip-poor-wills joined in as they pursued midges in the upper air; slow-going cow-bells struck out a homely accompaniment—and this was what each one said: "You've found your way back at last, have you?"

The old voices of the soil spoke to him. Leaf and bud and blossom conversed with him in the old vocabulary of his careless youth—the inanimate things, the familiar stones and rails, the gates and furrows and roofs and turns of the road had an eloquence, too, and a power in the transformation. The country had smiled, and he had felt the breath of it, and his heart was drawn as if in a moment back to his old love. The city was far away.

This rural atavism, then, seized Robert Walmsley and possessed him. A queer thing he noticed in connection with it was that Alicia, sitting at his side, suddenly seemed to him a stranger. She did not

belong to this recurrent phase. Never before had she seemed so remote, so colourless and high—so intangible and unreal. And yet he had never admired her more than when she sat there by him in the rickety spring wagon, chiming no more with his mood and with her environment than the Matterhorn chimes with a peasant's cabbage garden.

That night, when the greetings and the supper were over, the entire family, including Buff, the yellow dog, bestrewed itself upon the front porch. Alicia, not haughty but silent, sat in the shadow dressed in an exquisite pale-grey tea-gown. Robert's mother discoursed to her happily concerning marmalade and lumbago. Tom sat on the top step; Sisters Millie and Pam on the lowest step to catch the lightning bugs. Mother had the willow rocker. Father sat in the big arm-chair with one of its arms gone. Buff sprawled in the middle of the porch in everybody's way. The twilight pixies and pucks stole forth unseen and plunged other poignant shafts of memory into the heart of Robert. A rural madness entered his soul. The city was far away.

Father sat without his pipe, writhing in his heavy boots, a sacrifice to rigid courtesy. Robert shouted: "No, you don't!" He fetched the pipe and lit it; he seized the old gentleman's boots and tore them off. The last one slipped suddenly, and Mr. Robert Walmsley, of Washington Square, tumbled off the porch backward with Buff on top of him, howling fearfully. Tom laughed sarcastically.

Robert tore off his coat and vest and hurled them into a lilac bush. "Come out here, you land-lubber," he cried to Tom, "and I'll put grass seed on your back. I think you called me a 'dude' a while ago. Come along and cut your capers."

Tom understood the invitation and accepted it with delight. Three times they wrestled on the grass, "side holds," even as the giants of the mat. And twice was Tom forced to bite grass at the hands of the distinguished lawyer. Dishevelled, panting, each still boasting of his own prowess, they stumbled back to the porch. Millie cast a pert reflection upon the qualities of a city brother. In an instant Robert had secured a horrid katydid in his fingers and bore down upon her. Screaming wildly, she fled up the lane, pursued by the avenging glass of form. A quarter of a mile and they returned, she full of apology to the victorious "dude." The rustic mania possessed him unabatedly.

"I can do up a cowpenful of you slow hayseeds," he proclaimed vaingloriously. "Bring on your bulldogs, your hired men, and your log-rollers."

He turned hand-springs on the grass that prodded Tom to envious sarcasm. And then, with a whoop, he clattered to the rear and brought back Uncle Ike, a battered coloured retainer of the family, with his banjo, and strewed sand on the porch and danced "Chicken

in the Bread Tray" and did buck-and-wing wonders for half an hour longer. Incredibly wild and boisterous things he did. He sang, he told stories that set all but one shrieking, he played the yokel, the humorous clodhopper; he was mad, mad with the revival of the old life in his blood.

He became so extravagant, that once his mother sought gently to reprove him. Then Alicia moved as though she were about to speak, but she did not. Through it all she sat immovable, a slim, white spirit in the dusk that no man might question or read.

By and by she asked permission to ascend to her room, saying that she was tired. On her way she passed Robert. He was standing in the door, the figure of vulgar comedy, with ruffled hair, reddened face, and unpardonable confusion of attire—no trace there of the immaculate Robert Walmsley, the courted clubman and ornament of select circles. He was doing a conjuring trick with some household utensils, and the family, now won over to him without exception, was beholding him with worshipful admiration.

As Alicia passed in Robert started suddenly. He had forgotten for the moment that she was present. Without a glance at him she went on upstairs.

After that the fun grew quiet. An hour passed in talk, and then Robert went up himself.

She was standing by the window when he entered their room. She was still clothed as when they were on the porch. Outside and crowding against the window was a giant apple tree, full blossomed.

Robert sighed and went near the window. He was ready to meet his fate. A confessed vulgarian, he foresaw the verdict of justice in the shape of that still, white-clad form. He knew the rigid lines that a Van Der Pool would draw. He was a peasant gambolling indecorously in the valley, and the pure, cold, white, unthawed summit of the Matterhorn could not but frown on him. He had been unmasked by his own actions. All the polish, the poise, the form that the city had given him had fallen from him like an ill-fitting mantle at the first breath of a country breeze. Dully he awaited the approaching condemnation.

"Robert," said the calm, cool voice of his judge, "I thought I married a gentleman."

Yes, it was coming. And yet, in the face of it, Robert Walmsley was eagerly regarding a certain branch of the apple tree upon which he used to climb out of that very window. He believed he could do it now. He wondered how many blossoms there were on the tree—ten millions? But here was some one speaking again:

"I thought I married a gentleman," the voice went on, "but——"

Why had she come and was standing so close by his side?

"But I find that I have married"—was this Alicia talking?—"something better—a man. Bob, dear, kiss me, won't you?"

The city was far away.

THE COP AND THE ANTHEM

"O. HENRY"

On his bench in Madison Square Soapy moved uneasily. When wild goose honk high of nights, and when women without sealskin coats grow kind to their husbands, and when Soapy moves uneasily on his bench in the park, you may know that winter is near at hand.

A dead leaf fell in Soapy's lap. That was Jack Frost's card. Jack is kind to the regular denizens of Madison Square, and gives fair warning of his annual call. At the corners of four streets he hands his pasteboard to the North Wind, footman of the mansion of All Outdoors, so that the inhabitants thereof may make ready.

Soapy's mind became cognisant of the fact that the time had come for him to resolve himself into a singular Committee of Ways and Means to provide against the coming rigour. And therefore he moved uneasily on his bench.

The hibernatorial ambitions of Soapy were not of the highest. In them were no considerations of Mediterranean cruises, of soporific Southern skies or drifting in the Vesuvian Bay. Three months on the Island was what his soul craved. Three months of assured board and bed and congenial company, safe from Boreas and blue-coats, seemed to Soapy the essence of things desirable.

For years the hospitable Blackwell's had been his winter quarters. Just as his more fortunate fellow New Yorkers had bought their tickets to Palm Beach and the Riviera each winter, so Soapy had made his humble arrangements for his annual hegira to the Island. And now the time was come. On the previous night three Sabbath newspapers, distributed beneath his coat, about his ankles and over his lap, had failed to repulse the cold as he slept on his bench near the spurting fountain in the ancient square. So the Island loomed large and timely in Soapy's mind. He scorned the provisions made in the name of charity for the city's dependents. In Soapy's opinion the Law was more benign than Philanthropy. There was an endless round of institutions, municipal and eleemosynary, on which he might set out and receive lodging and food accordant with the simple life. But to one of Soapy's proud spirit the gifts of charity are encumbered. If not in coin you must pay in humiliation of spirit for every benefit received at the hands of philanthropy. As Cæsar had his Brutus, every bed of charity must have its toll of a bath, every loaf of bread its compensation of a private and personal

inquisition. Wherefore it is better to be a guest of the law, which though conducted by rules, does not meddle unduly with a gentleman's private affairs.

Soapy, having decided to go to the Island, at once set about accomplishing his desire. There were many easy ways of doing this. The pleasantest was to dine luxuriously at some expensive restaurant; and then, after declaring insolvency, be handed over quietly and without uproar to a policeman. An accommodating magistrate would do the rest.

Soapy left his bench and strolled out of the square and across the level sea of asphalt, where Broadway and Fifth Avenue flow together. Up Broadway he turned, and halted at a glittering café, where are gathered together nightly the choicest products of the grape, the silkworm and the protoplasm.

Soapy had confidence in himself from the lowest button of his vest upward. He was shaven, and his coat was decent and his neat black, ready-tied four-in-hand had been presented to him by a lady missionary on Thanksgiving Day. If he could reach a table in the restaurant unsuspected, success would be his. The portion of him that would show above the table would raise no doubt in the waiter's mind. A roasted mallard duck, thought Soapy, would be about the thing—with a bottle of Chablis, and then Camembert, a demi-tasse and a cigar. One dollar for the cigar would be enough. The total would not be so high as to call forth any supreme manifestation of revenge from the café management; and yet the meat would leave him filled and happy for the journey to his winter refuge.

But as Soapy set foot inside the restaurant door the head waiter's eye fell upon his frayed trousers and decadent shoes. Strong and ready hands turned him about and conveyed him in silence and haste to the sidewalk and averted the ignoble fate of the menaced mallard.

Soapy turned off Broadway. It seemed that his route to the coveted island was not to be an epicurean one. Some other way of entering limbo must be thought of.

At a corner of Sixth Avenue electric lights and cunningly displayed wares behind plate-glass made a shop window conspicuous. Soapy took a cobble-stone and dashed it through the glass. People came running round the corner, a policeman in the lead. Soapy stood still, with his hands in his pockets, and smiled at the sight of brass buttons.

"Where's the man that done that?" inquired the officer excitedly.

"Don't you figure out that I might have had something to do with it?" said Soapy, not without sarcasm, but friendly, as one greets good fortune.

The policeman's mind refused to accept Soapy even as a clue. Men who smash windows do not remain to parley with the law's minions. They take to their heels. The policeman saw a man half-

way down the block running to catch a car. With drawn club he joined in the pursuit. Soapy, with disgust in his heart, loafed along, twice unsuccessful.

On the opposite side of the street was a restaurant of no great pretensions. It catered to large appetites and modest purses. Its crockery and atmosphere were thick; its soup and napery thin. Into this place Soapy took his accusive shoes and tell-tale trousers without challenge. At a table he sat and consumed beefsteak, flapjacks, doughnuts, and pie. And then to the waiter he betrayed the fact that the minutest coin and himself were strangers.

"Now, get busy and call a cop," said Soapy. "And don't keep a gentleman waiting."

"No cop for youse," said the waiter, with a voice like butter cakes and an eye like the cherry in a Manhattan cocktail. "Hey, Con!"

Neatly upon his left ear on the callous pavement two waiters pitched Soapy. He arose, joint by joint, as a carpenter's rule opens, and beat the dust from his clothes. Arrest seemed but a rosy dream. The Island seemed very far away. A policeman who stood before a drug store two doors away laughed and walked down the street.

Five blocks Soapy travelled before his courage permitted him to woo capture again. This time the opportunity presented what he fatuously termed to himself a "cinch." A young woman of a modest and pleasing guise was standing before a show window gazing with sprightly interest at its display of shaving mugs and inkstands, and two yards from the window a large policeman of severe demeanour leaned against a water-plug.

It was Soapy's design to assume the rôle of the despicable and execrated "masher." The refined and elegant appearance of his victim and the contiguity of the conscientious cop encouraged him to believe that he would soon feel the pleasant official clutch upon his arm that would ensure his winter quarters on the right little, tight little isle.

Soapy straightened the lady missionary's ready-made tie, dragged his shrinking cuffs into the open, set his hat at a killing cant and sidled toward the young women. He made eyes at her, was taken with sudden coughs and "hems," smiled, smirked, and went brazenly through the impudent and contemptible litany of the "masher." With half an eye Soapy saw that the policeman was watching him fixedly. The young woman moved away a few steps, and again bestowed her absorbed attention upon the shaving mugs. Soapy followed, boldly stepping to her side, raised his hat and said:

"Ah there, Bedelia! Don't you want to come and play in my yard?"

The policeman was still looking. The persecuted young woman had but to beckon a finger and Soapy would be practically *en route* for his insular haven. Already he imagined he could feel the cosy warmth of the station-house. The young woman faced him and,

stretching out a hand, caught Soapy's coat sleeve.

"Sure, Mike," she said joyfully, "if you'll blow me to a pail of suds. I'd have spoke to you sooner, but the cop was watching."

With the young woman playing the clinging ivy to his oak Soapy walked past the policeman overcome with gloom. He seemed doomed to liberty.

At the next corner he shook off his companion and ran. He halted in the district where by night are found the lightest streets, hearts, vows, and librettos. Women in furs and men in greatcoats moved gaily in the wintry air. A sudden fear seized Soapy that some dreadful enchantment had rendered him immune to arrest. The thought brought a little of panic upon it, and when he came upon another policeman lounging grandly in front of a transplendent theatre he caught at the immediate straw of "disorderly conduct."

On the sidewalk Soapy began to yell drunken gibberish at the top of his harsh voice. He danced, howled, raved, and otherwise disturbed the welkin.

The policeman twirled his club, turned his back to Soapy and remarked to a citizen:

"'Tis one of them Yale lads celebratin' the goose egg they give to the Hartford College. Noisy; but no harm. We've instructions to lave them be."

Disconsolate, Soapy ceased his unavailing racket. Would never a policeman lay hands on him? In his fancy the Island seemed an unattainable Arcadia. He buttoned his thin coat against the chilling wind.

In a cigar store he saw a well-dressed man lighting a cigar at a swinging light. His silk umbrella he had set by the door on entering. Soapy stepped inside, secured the umbrella and sauntered off with it slowly. The man at the cigar light followed hastily.

"My umbrella," he said sternly.

"Oh, is it?" sneered Soapy, adding insult to petit larceny. "Well, why don't you call a policeman? I took it. Your umbrella! Why don't you call a cop? There stands one on the corner."

The umbrella owner slowed his steps. Soapy did likewise, with a presentiment that luck would run against him. The policeman looked at the two curiously.

"Of course," said the umbrella man—"that is—well, you know how these mistakes occur—I—if it's your umbrella I hope you'll excuse me—I picked it up this morning in a restaurant—If you recognise it as yours, why—I hope you'll——"

"Of course it's mine," said Soapy viciously.

The ex-umbrella man retreated. The policeman hurried to assist a tall blonde in an opera cloak across the street in front of a street car that was approaching two blocks away.

Soapy walked eastward through a street damaged by improve-

ments. He hurled the umbrella wrathfully into an excavation. He muttered against the men who wear helmets and carry clubs. Because he wanted to fall into their clutches, they seemed to regard him as a king who could do no wrong.

At length Soapy reached one of the avenues to the east where the glitter and turmoil was but faint. He set his face down this toward Madison Square, for the homing instinct survives even when the home is a park bench.

But on an unusually quiet corner Soapy came to a standstill. Here was an old church, quaint and rambling and gabled. Through one violet-stained window a soft light glowed, where, no doubt, the organist loitered over the keys, making sure of his mastery of the coming Sabbath anthem. For there drifted out to Soapy's ears sweet music that caught and held him transfixed against the convolutions of the iron fence.

The moon was above, lustrous and serene ; vehicles and pedestrians were few ; sparrows twittered sleepily in the eaves—for a little while the scene might have been a country churchyard. And the anthem that the organist played cemented Soapy to the iron fence, for he had known it well in the days when his life contained such things as mothers and roses and ambitions and friends and immaculate thoughts and collars.

The conjunction of Soapy's receptive state of mind and the influences about the old church wrought a sudden and wonderful change in his soul. He viewed with swift horror the pit into which he had tumbled, the degraded days, unworthy desires, dead hopes, wrecked faculties, and base motives that made up his existence.

And also in a moment his heart responded thrillingly to this novel mood. An instantaneous and strong impulse moved him to battle with his desperate fate. He would pull himself out of the mire ; he would make a man of himself again ; he would conquer the evil that had taken possession of him. There was time ; he was comparatively young yet ; he would resurrect his old eager ambitions and pursue them without faltering. Those solemn but sweet organ notes had set up a revolution in him. To-morrow he would go into the roaring down-town district and find work. A fur importer had once offered him a place as driver. He would find him to-morrow and ask for the position. He would be somebody in the world. He would——

Soapy felt a hand laid on his arm. He looked quickly round into the broad face of a policeman.

" What are you doin' here ? " asked the officer.

" Nothin'," said Soapy.

" Then come along," said the policeman.

" Three months on the Island," said the Magistrate in the Police Court the next morning.

THE LAST LEAF

"O. Henry"

In a little district west of Washington Square the streets have run crazy and broken themselves into small strips called "places." These "places" make strange angles and curves. One street crosses itself a time or two. An artist once discovered a valuable possibility in this street. Suppose a collector with a bill for paints, paper, and canvas should, in traversing this route, suddenly meet himself coming back, without a cent having been paid on account!

So, to quaint old Greenwich Village the art people soon came prowling, hunting for north windows and eighteenth-century gables and Dutch attics and low rents. Then they imported some pewter mugs and a chafing dish or two from Sixth Avenue, and became a "colony."

At the top of a squatty, three-storey brick house Sue and Johnsy had their studio. "Johnsy" was familiar for Joanna. One was from Maine; the other from California. They had met at the table d'hôte of an Eighth street "Delmonico's," and found their tastes in art, chicory salad, and bishop sleeves so congenial that the joint studio resulted.

That was in May. In November a cold, unseen stranger, whom the doctors called Pneumonia, stalked about the colony, touching one here and there with his icy finger. Over on the east side this ravager strode boldly, smiting his victims by scores, but his feet trod slowly through the maze of the narrow and moss-grown "places."

Mr. Pneumonia was not what you would call a chivalric old gentleman. A mite of a little woman with blood thinned by California zephyrs was hardly fair game for the red-fisted, short-breathed old duffer. But Johnsy he smote; and she lay, scarcely moving, on her painted iron bedstead, looking through the small Dutch window-panes at the blank side of the next brick house.

One morning the busy doctor invited Sue into the hallway with a shaggy, grey eyebrow.

"She has one chance in—let us say, ten," he said, as he shook down the mercury in his clinical thermometer. "And that chance is for her to want to live. This way people have of lining-up on the side of the undertaker makes the entire pharmacopœia look silly. Your little lady has made up her mind that she's not going to get well. Has she anything on her mind?"

"She—she wanted to paint the Bay of Naples some day," said Sue.

"Paint?—bosh! Has she anything on her mind worth thinking about twice—a man, for instance?"

"A man?" said Sue, with a jews'-harp twang in her voice. "Is a man worth—but no, doctor; there is nothing of the kind."

"Well, it is the weakness, then," said the doctor. "I will do all that science, so far as it may filter through my efforts, can accomplish. But whenever my patient begins to count the carriages in her funeral procession I subtract 50 per cent from the curative power of medicines. If you will get her to ask one question about the new winter styles in cloak sleeves I will promise you a one-in-five chance for her, instead of one in ten."

After the doctor had gone, Sue went into the workroom and cried a Japanese napkin to a pulp. Then she swaggered into Johnsy's room with her drawing-board, whistling ragtime.

Johnsy lay, scarcely making a ripple under the bedclothes, with her face toward the window. Sue stopped whistling, thinking she was asleep.

She arranged her board and began a pen-and-ink drawing to illustrate a magazine story. Young artists must pave their way to Art by drawing pictures for magazine stories that young authors write to pave their way to Literature.

As Sue was sketching a pair of elegant horseshow riding trousers and a monocle on the figure of the hero, an Idaho cowboy, she heard a low sound, several times repeated. She went quickly to the bedside.

Johnsy's eyes were open wide. She was looking out the window and counting—counting backward.

"Twelve," she said, and a little later, "eleven"; and then "ten," and "nine"; and then "eight" and "seven," almost together.

Sue looked solicitously out the window. What was there to count? There was only a bare, dreary yard to be seen, and the blank side of the brick house twenty feet away. An old, old ivy vine, gnarled and decayed at the roots, climbed half-way up the brick wall. The cold breath of autumn had stricken its leaves from the vine until its skeleton branches clung, almost bare, to the crumbling bricks.

"What is it, dear?" asked Sue.

"Six," said Johnsy, in almost a whisper. "They're falling faster now. Three days ago there were almost a hundred. It made my head ache to count them. But now it's easy. There goes another one. There are only five left now."

"Five what, dear? Tell your Sudie."

"Leaves. On the ivy vine. When the last one falls I must go too. I've known that for three days. Didn't the doctor tell you?"

"Oh, I never heard of such nonsense!" complained Sue, with magnificent scorn. "What have old ivy leaves to do with your getting well? And you used to love that vine so, you naughty girl. Don't be a goosey. Why, the doctor told me this morning that your chances for getting well real soon were—let's see exactly what he said—he said the chances were ten to one! Why, that's almost as good a chance as we have in New York when we ride on the street cars or walk past a new building. Try to take some broth now, and let Sudie go back to her drawing, so she can sell the editor man with it, and buy port wine for her sick child, and pork chops for her greedy self."

"You needn't get any more wine," said Johnsy, keeping her eyes fixed out the window. "There goes another. No, I don't want any broth. That leaves just four. I want to see the last one fall before it gets dark. Then I'll go too."

"Johnsy, dear," said Sue, bending over her, "will you promise me to keep your eyes closed, and not look out the window until I am done working? I must hand these drawings in by to-morrow. I need the light, or I would draw the shade down."

"Couldn't you draw in the other room?" asked Johnsy coldly.

"I'd rather be here by you," said Sue. "Besides, I don't want you to keep looking at those silly ivy leaves."

"Tell me as soon as you have finished," said Johnsy, closing her eyes, and lying white and still as a fallen statue, "because I want to see the last one fall. I'm tired of waiting. I'm tired of thinking. I want to turn loose my hold on everything, and go sailing down, down, just like one of those poor, tired leaves."

"Try to sleep," said Sue. "I must call Behrman up to be my model for the old hermit miner. I'll not be gone a minute. Don't try to move till I come back."

Old Behrman was a painter who lived on the ground floor beneath them. He was past sixty and had a Michael Angelo's Moses beard curling down from the head of a satyr along the body of an imp. Behrman was a failure in art. Forty years he had wielded the brush without getting near enough to touch the hem of his Mistress's robe. He had been always about to paint a masterpiece, but had never yet begun it. For several years he had painted nothing except now and then a daub in the line of commerce or advertising. He earned a little by serving as a model to those young artists in the colony who could not pay the price of a professional. He drank gin to excess, and still talked of his coming masterpiece. For the rest he was a fierce little old man, who scoffed terribly at softness in any one, and who regarded himself as especial mastiff-in-waiting to protect the two young artists in the studio above.

Sue found Behrman smelling strongly of juniper berries in his dimly lighted den below. In one corner was a blank canvas on an easel that had been waiting there for twenty-five years to receive

the first line of the masterpiece. She told him of Johnsy's fancy, and how she feared she would, indeed, light and fragile as a leaf herself, float away when her slight hold upon the world grew weaker.

Old Behrman, with his red eyes plainly streaming, shouted his contempt and derision for such idiotic imaginings.

"Vass!" he cried. "Is dere people in de world mit der foolishness to die because leafs dey drop off from a confounded vine? I haf not heard of such a thing. No, I vill not bose as a model for your fool hermit-dunderhead. Vy do you allow dot silly pusiness to come in der prain of her? Ach, dot poor lettle Miss Yohnsy."

"She is very ill and weak," said Sue, "and the fever has left her mind morbid and full of strange fancies. Very well, Mr. Behrman, if you do not care to pose for me, you needn't. But I think you are a horrid old—old flibbertigibbet."

"You are just like a woman!" yelled Behrman. "Who said I vill not bose? Go on. I come mit you. For half an hour I haf peen trying to say dot I am ready to bose. Gott! dis is not any blace in which one so goot as Miss Yohnsy shall lie sick. Some day I vill baint a masterpiece, and ve shall all go avay. Gott! yes."

Johnsy was sleeping when they went upstairs. Sue pulled the shade down to the window-sill, and motioned Behrman into the other room. In there they peered out the window fearfully at the ivy vine. Then they looked at each other for a moment without speaking. A persistent, cold rain was falling, mingled with snow. Behrman, in his old blue shirt, took his seat as the hermit-miner on an upturned kettle for a rock.

When Sue awoke from an hour's sleep the next morning she found Johnsy, with dull, wide-open eyes staring at the drawn green shade.

"Pull it up; I want to see," she ordered in a whisper.

Wearily Sue obeyed.

But lo! after the beating rain and fierce gusts of wind that had endured through the livelong night, there yet stood out against the brick wall one ivy leaf. It was the last on the vine. Still dark-green near its stem, but with its serrated edges tinted with the yellow of dissolution and decay, it hung bravely from a branch some twenty feet above the ground.

"It is the last one," said Johnsy. "I thought it would surely fall during the night. I heard the wind. It will fall to-day, and I shall die at the same time."

"Dear, dear!" said Sue, leaning her worn face down to the pillow; "think of me, if you won't think of yourself. What would I do?"

But Johnsy did not answer. The lonesomest thing in all the world is a soul when it is making ready to go on its mysterious, far journey. The fancy seemed to possess her more strongly as one by one the ties that bound her to friendship and to earth were loosed.

The day wore away, and even through the twilight they could see the lone ivy leaf clinging to its stem against the wall. And then, with the coming of the night the north wind was again loosed, while the rain still beat against the windows and pattered down from the low Dutch eaves.

When it was light enough Johnsy, the merciless, commanded that the shade be raised.

The ivy leaf was still there.

Johnsy lay for a long time looking at it. And then she called to Sue, who was stirring her chicken broth over the gas stove.

"I've been a bad girl, Sudie," said Johnsy. "Something has made that last leaf stay there to show me how wicked I was. It is a sin to want to die. You may bring me a little broth now, and some milk with a little port in it, and—no ; bring me a hand-mirror first ; and then pack some pillows about me, and I will sit up and watch you cook."

An hour later she said—

"Sudie, some day I hope to paint the Bay of Naples."

The doctor came in the afternoon, and Sue had an excuse to go into the hallway as he left.

"Even chances," said the doctor, taking Sue's thin, shaking hand in his. "With good nursing you'll win. And now I must see another case I have downstairs. Behrman, his name is—some kind of an artist, I believe. Pneumonia, too. He is an old, weak man, and the attack is acute. There is no hope for him ; but he goes to the hospital to-day to be made more comfortable."

The next day the doctor said to Sue : "She's out of danger. You've won. Nutrition and care now—that's all."

And that afternoon Sue came to the bed where Johnsy lay, contentedly knitting a very blue and very useless woollen shoulder scarf, and put one arm around her, pillows and all.

"I have something to tell you, white mouse," she said. "Mr. Behrman died of pneumonia to-day in the hospital. He was ill only two days. The janitor found him on the morning of the first day in his room downstairs helpless with pain. His shoes and clothing were wet through and icy cold. They couldn't imagine where he had been on such a dreadful night. And then they found a lantern, still lighted, and a ladder that had been dragged from its place and some scattered brushes, and a palette with green and yellow colours mixed on it, and—look out the window, dear, at the last ivy leaf on the wall. Didn't you wonder why it never fluttered or moved when the wind blew ? Ah, darling, it's Behrman's masterpiece—he painted it there the night that the last leaf fell."

THE LOST BLEND

"O. HENRY"

SINCE the bar has been blessed by the clergy, and cocktails open the dinners of the elect, one may speak of the saloon. Teetotallers need not listen, if they choose; there is always the slot restaurant, where a dime dropped into the cold boullion aperture will bring forth a dry Martini.

Con Lantry worked in the sober side of the bar in Kenealy's café. You and I stood, one-legged like geese, on the other side, and went into voluntary liquidation with our week's wages. Opposite danced Con, clean, temperate, clear-headed, polite, white-jacketed, punctual, trustworthy, young, responsible, and took our money.

The saloon (whether blessed or cursed) stood in one of those little "places" which are parallelograms instead of streets, and inhabited by laundries, decayed Knickerbocker families and Bohemians who have nothing to do with either.

Over the café lived Kenealy and his family. His daughter Katherine had eyes of dark Irish—but why should you be told? Be content with your Geraldine or your Eliza Ann. For Con dreamed of her; and when she called softly at the foot of the back stairs for the pitcher of beer for dinner, his heart went up and down like a milk punch in the shaker. Orderly and fit are the rules of Romance; and if you hurl the last shilling of your fortune upon the bar for a whisky, the bar-tender shall take it, and marry his boss's daughter, and good will grow out of it.

But not so Con. For in the presence of woman he was tongue-tied and scarlet. He who would quell with his eye the sonorous youth whom the claret punch made loquacious, or smash with lemon squeezer the obstreperous, or hurl gutterward the cantankerous without a wrinkle coming to his white lawn tie, when he stood before woman he was voiceless, incoherent, stuttering, buried beneath a hot avalanche of bashfulness and misery. What, then, was he before Katherine? A trembler, with no word to say for himself, a stone without blarney, the dumbest lover that ever babbled of the weather in the presence of his divinity.

There came to Kenealy's two sunburned men, Riley and McQuirk. They had conference with Kenealy; and then they took possession of a back room which they filled with bottles and siphons and jugs and druggist's measuring glasses. All the appurtenances and liquids of a saloon were there, but they dispensed no drinks. All day long

the two sweltered in there, pouring and mixing unknown brews and decoctions from the liquors in their store. Riley had the education, and he figured on reams of paper, reducing gallons to ounces and quarts to fluid drams. McQuirk, a morose man with a red eye, dashed each unsuccessful completed mixture into the waste pipes with curses gentle, husky and deep. They laboured heavily and untiringly to achieve some mysterious solution like two alchemists striving to resolve gold from the elements.

Into this back room one evening when his watch was done sauntered Con. His professional curiosity had been stirred by these occult bar-tenders at whose bar none drank, and who daily drew upon Kenealy's store of liquors to follow their consuming and fruitless experiments.

Down the back stairs came Katherine with her smile like sunrise on Gweebarra Bay.

"Good-evening, Mr. Lantry," says she. "And what is the news to-day, if you please?"

"It looks like r-rain," stammered the shy one, backing to the wall.

"It couldn't do better," said Katherine. "I'm thinking there's nothing the worse off for a little water." In the back room Riley and McQuirk toiled like bearded witches over their strange compounds. From fifty bottles they drew liquids carefully measured after Riley's figures, and shook the whole together in a great glass vessel. Then McQuirk would dash it out, with gloomy profanity, and they would begin again.

"Sit down," said Riley to Con, "and I'll tell you."

"Last summer me and Tim concludes that an American bar in this nation of Nicaragua would pay. There was a town on the coast where there's nothing to eat but quinine and nothing to drink but rum. The natives and foreigners lay down with chills and get up with fevers; and a good mixed drink is nature's remedy for all such tropical inconveniences.

"So we lays in a fine stock of wet goods in New York, and bar fixtures and glassware, and we sails for that Santa Palma town on a line steamer. On the way me and Tim sees flying fish and plays seven-up with the captain and steward, and already begins to feel like the high-ball kings of the tropic of Capricorn.

"When we gets in five hours of the country that we was going to introduce to long drinks and short change, the captain calls us over to the starboard binnacle and recollects a few things.

"'I forgot to tell you, boys,' says he, 'that Nicaragua slapped an import duty of 48 per cent. *ad valorem* on all bottled goods last month. The President took a bottle of Cincinnati hair tonic by mistake for tabasco sauce, and he's getting even. Barrelled goods is free.'

"'Sorry you didn't mention it sooner,' says we. And we bought two forty-two gallon casks from the captain, and opened every bottle

we had and dumped the stuff all together in the casks. That 48 per cent. would have ruined us; so we took the chances on making that $1200 cocktail rather than throw the stuff away.

"Well, when we landed we tapped one of the barrels. The mixture was something heartrending. It was the colour of a plate of Bowery pea-soup, and it tasted like one of those coffee substitutes your aunt makes you take for the heart trouble you get by picking losers. We gave a nigger four fingers of it to try it, and he lay under a cocoanut tree three days beating the sand with his heels and refused to sign a testimonial.

"But the other barrel! Say, bar-tender, did you ever put on a straw hat with a yellow band around it and go up in a balloon with a pretty girl with $8,000,000 in your pocket all at the same time? That's what thirty drops of it would make you feel like. With two fingers of it inside you, you would bury your face in your hands and cry because there wasn't anything more worth while around for you to lick than little Jim Jeffries. Yes, sir, the stuff in that second barrel was distilled elixir of battle, money and high life. It was the colour of gold and as clear as glass, and it shone after dark like the sunshine was still in it. A thousand years from now you'll get a drink like that across the bar.

"Well, we started up business with that one line of drinks, and it was enough. The piebald gentry of that country stuck to it like a hive of bees. If that barrel had lasted, that country would have become the greatest on earth. When we opened up of mornings we had a line of Generals and Colonels and ex-Presidents and revolutionists a block long waiting to be served. We started in at 50 cents silver a drink. The last ten gallons went easy at $5 a gulp. It was wonderful stuff. It gave a man courage and ambition and nerve to do anything; at the same time he didn't care whether his money was tainted or fresh from the Ice Trust. When that barrel was half gone Nicaragua had repudiated the National Debt, removed the duty on cigarettes, and was about to declare war on the United States and England.

"'Twas by accident we discovered this king of drinks, and 'twill be by good luck if we strike it again. For ten months we've been trying. Small lots at a time, we've mixed barrels of all the harmful ingredients known to the profession of drinking. Ye could have stocked ten bars with the whiskeys, brandies, cordials, bitters, gins and wines me and Tim have wasted. A glorious drink like that to be denied to the world! 'Tis a sorrow and a loss of money. The United States as a nation would welcome a drink of the sort, and pay for it."

All the while McQuirk had been carefully measuring and pouring together small quantities of various spirits, as Riley called them, from his latest pencilled prescription. The completed mixture was of a vile, mottled chocolate colour. McQuirk tasted it, and hurled

it, with appropriate epithets, into the waste sink.

" 'Tis a strange story, even if true," said Con. " I'll be going now along to my supper."

" Take a drink," said Riley. " We've all kinds except the lost blend."

" I never drink," said Con, " anything stronger than water. I am just after meeting Miss Katherine by the stairs. She said a true word. ' There's not anything,' says she, ' but is better off for a little water.' "

When Con had left them Riley almost felled McQuirk by a blow on the back.

" Did you hear that ? " he shouted. " Two fools are we. The six dozen bottles of 'pollinaris we had on the ship—ye opened them yourself—which barrel did ye pour them in—which barrel, ye mud-head ? "

" I mind," said McQuirk slowly, " 'twas in the second barrel we opened. I mind the blue piece of paper pasted on the side of it."

" We've got it now," cried Riley. " 'Twas that we lacked. 'Tis the water that does the trick. Everything else we had right. Hurry, man, and get two bottles of 'pollinaris from the bar, while I figure out the proportionments with me pencil."

An hour later Con strolled down the sidewalk toward Kenealy's café. Thus faithful employees haunt, during their recreation hours, the vicinity where they labour, drawn by some mysterious attraction.

A police patrol wagon stood at the side door. Three able cops were half carrying, half hustling Riley and McQuirk up its rear steps. The eyes and faces of each bore the bruises and cuts of sanguinary and assiduous conflict. Yet they whooped with strange joy, and directed upon the police the feeble remnants of their pugnacious madness.

" Began fighting each other in the back room," explained Kenealy to Con. " And singing ! That was worse. Smashed everything pretty much up. But they're good men. They'll pay for everything. Trying to invent some new kind of cocktail, they was. I'll see they come out all right in the morning."

Con sauntered into the back room to view the battle-field. As he went through the hall Katherine was just coming down the stairs.

" Good-evening again, Mr. Lantry," said she. " And is there no news from the weather yet ? "

" Still threatens r-rain," said Con, slipping past with red in his smooth, pale cheek.

Riley and McQuirk had indeed waged a great and friendly battle. Broken bottles and glasses were everywhere. The room was full of alcohol fumes ; the floor was variegated with spirituous puddles.

On the table stood a 32-ounce glass graduated measure. In the bottom of it were two tablespoonfuls of liquid—a bright golden liquid that seemed to hold the sunshine a prisoner in its auriferous depths.

Con smelled it. He tasted it. He drank it.

As he returned through the hall Katherine was just going up the stairs.

"No news yet, Mr. Lantry?" she asked, with her teasing laugh.

Con lifted her clear from the floor and held her there.

"The news is," he said, "that we're to be married."

"Put me down, sir!" she cried indignantly, "or I will—— Oh, Con, where, oh, wherever did you get the nerve to say it?"

VANITY AND SOME SABLES

"O. HENRY"

WHEN "Kid" Brady was sent to the ropes by Molly McKeever's blue-black eyes he withdrew from the Stovepipe Gang. So much for the power of a colleen's blanderin' tongue and stubborn true-heartedness. If you are a man who read this, may such an influence be sent you before two o'clock to-morrow; if you are a woman, may your Pomeranian greet you this morning with a cold nose—a sign of dog health and your happiness.

The Stovepipe Gang borrowed its name from a subdistrict of the city called the "Stovepipe," which is a narrow and natural extension of the familiar district known as "Hell's Kitchen." The "Stovepipe" strip of town runs along Eleventh and Twelfth Avenues on the river, and bends a hard and sooty elbow around little, lost, homeless De Witt Clinton Park. Consider that a stovepipe is an important factor in any kitchen and the situation is analysed. The chefs in "Hell's Kitchen" are many, and the Stovepipe Gang wears the cordon blue.

The members of this unchartered but widely known brotherhood appeared to pass their time on street corners arrayed like the lilies of the conservatory and busy with nail files and penknives. Thus displayed as a guarantee of good faith, they carried on an innocuous conversation in a 200-word vocabulary, to the casual observer as innocent and immaterial as that heard in the clubs seven blocks to the east.

But off exhibition the "Stovepipes" were not mere street corner ornaments addicted to posing and manicuring. Their serious occupation was the separating of citizens from their coin and valuables. Preferably this was done by weird and singular tricks without noise or bloodshed; but whenever the citizen honoured by their attentions refused to impoverish himself gracefully, his objections came to be spread finally upon some police station blotter or hospital register.

The police held the Stovepipe Gang in perpetual suspicion and respect. As the nightingale's liquid note is heard in the deepest shadows, so along the " Stovepipe's " dark and narrow confines the whistle for reserves punctures the dull ear of night. Whenever there was smoke in the " Stovepipe " the tasselled men in blue knew there was fire in " Hell's Kitchen."

" Kid " Brady promised Molly to be good. " Kid " was the vainest the strongest, the wariest and the most successful plotter in the gang. Therefore, the boys were sorry to give him up.

But they witnessed his fall to a virtuous life without protest. For, in the Kitchen it is considered neither unmanly nor improper for a guy to do as his girl advises.

Black her eye for love's sake, if you will ; but it is all-to-the-good business to do a thing when she wants you to do it.

" Turn off the hydrant," said the Kid, one night when Molly, tearful, besought him to amend his ways. " I'm going to cut out the gang. You for mine, and the simple life on the side. I'll tell you, Moll—I'll get work ; and in a year we'll get married. I'll do it for you. We'll get a flat and a flute, and a sewing machine, and a rubber plant and live as honest as we can."

" Oh, Kid," sighed Molly, wiping the powder off his shoulder with her handkerchief, " I'd rather hear you say that than to own all of New York. And we can be happy on so little ! "

The Kid looked down at his speckless cuffs and shining patent leathers with a suspicion of melancholy.

" It'll hurt hardest in the rags department," said he. " I've kind of always liked to rig out swell when I could. You know how I hate cheap things, Moll. This suit set me back sixty-five. Anything in the wearing apparel line has got to be just so, or it's to the misfit parlours for it, for mine. If I work I won't have so much coin to hand over to the little man with the big shears."

" Never mind, Kid. I'll like you just as much in a blue jumper as I would in a red automobile."

Before the Kid had grown large enough to knock out his father he had been compelled to learn the plumber's art. So now back to this honourable and useful profession he returned. But it was as an assistant that he engaged himself ; and it is the master plumber and not the assistant who wears diamonds as large as hailstones and looks contemptuously upon the marble colonnades of Senator Clark's mansion.

Eight months went by as smoothly and surely as though they had " elapsed " on a theatre programme. The Kid worked away at his pipes and solder with no symptoms of backsliding. The Stovepipe Gang continued its piracy on the high avenues, cracked policemen's heads, held up late travellers, invented new methods of peaceful plundering, copied Fifth Avenue's cut of clothes and neckwear fancies, and comported itself according to its lawless by-laws. But

the Kid stood firm and faithful to his Molly, even though the polish was gone from his finger-nails and it took him fifteen minutes to tie his purple silk ascot so that the worn places would not show.

One evening he brought a mysterious bundle with him to Molly's house.

"Open that, Moll!" he said in his large, quiet way. "It's for you."

Molly's eager fingers tore off the wrappings. She shrieked aloud, and in rushed a sprinkling of little McKeevers, and Ma McKeever, dishwashy, but an undeniable relative of the late Mrs. Eve.

Again Molly shrieked, and something dark and long and sinuous flew and enveloped her neck like an anaconda.

"Russian sables," said the Kid pridefully, enjoying the sight of Molly's round cheek against the clinging fur. "The real thing. They don't grow anything in Russia too good for you, Moll."

Molly plunged her hands into the muff, overturned a row of the family infants and flew to the mirror. Hint for the beauty column. To make bright eyes, rosy cheeks and a bewitching smile: Recipe—one set Russian sables. Apply.

When they were alone Molly became aware of a small cake of the ice of common sense floating down the full tide of her happiness.

"You're a bird, all right, Kid," she admitted gratefully. "I never had any furs on before in my life. But ain't Russian sables awful expensive? Seems to me I've heard they were."

"Have I ever chucked any bargain-sale stuff at you, Moll?" asked the Kid, with calm dignity. "Did you ever notice me leaning on the remnant counter or peering in the window of the five-and-ten? Call that scarf $250 and the muff $175 and you won't make any mistake about the price of Russian sables. The swell goods for me. Say, they look fine on you, Moll."

Molly hugged the sables to her bosom in rapture. And then her smile went away little by little, and she looked the Kid straight in the eye sadly and steadily.

He knew what every look of hers meant; and he laughed with a faint flush upon his face.

"Cut it out," he said, with affectionate roughness. "I told you I was done with that. I bought 'em and paid for 'em all right, with my own money!"

"Out of the money you worked for, Kid? Out of $75 a month?"

"Sure. I been saving up."

"Let's see—saved $425 in eight months, Kid?"

"Ah, let up," said the Kid, with some heat. "I had some money when I went to work. Do you think I've been holding 'em up again? I told you I'd quit. They're paid for on the square. Put 'em on and come out for a walk."

Molly calmed her doubts. Sables are soothing. Proud as a queen she went forth in the streets at the Kid's side. In all that region of low-lying streets Russian sables had never been seen before. The

word sped, and doors and windows blossomed with heads eager to see the swell furs Kid Brady had given his girl. All down the street there were "Oh's" and "Ah's," and the reported fabulous sum paid for the sables was passed from lip to lip, increasing as it went. At her right elbow sauntered the Kid, with the air of princes. Work had not diminished his love of pomp and show and his passion for the costly and genuine. On a corner they saw a group of the Stovepipe Gang loafing, immaculate. They raised their hats to the Kid's girl and went on with their calm, unaccented palaver.

Three blocks behind the admired couple strolled Detective Ransom, of the Central Office. Ransom was the only detective on the force who could walk abroad with safety in the Stovepipe district. He was fair dealing and unafraid, and went there with the hypothesis that the inhabitants were human. Many liked him, and now and then one would tip off to him something that he was looking for.

"What's the excitement down the street?" asked Ransom of a pale youth in a red sweater.

"Dey're out rubberin' at a set of buffalo robes Kid Brady staked his girl to," answered the youth. "Some say he paid $900 for de skins. Dey're swell all right enough."

"I hear Brady has been working at his old trade for nearly a year," said the detective. "He doesn't travel with the gang any more, does he?"

"He's workin', all right," said the red sweater, "but—say, sport, are you trailin' anything in the fur line? A job in a plumbin' shop don't match wid dem skins de Kid's girl's got on."

Ransom overtook the strolling couple on an empty street near the river bank. He touched the Kid's arm from behind.

"Let me see you a moment, Brady," he said quietly. His eye rested for a second on the long fur scarf thrown stylishly back over Molly's left shoulder. The Kid, with his old-time police-hating frown on his face, stepped a yard or two aside with the detective.

"Did you go to Mrs. Hethcote's on West 7th Street yesterday to fix a leaky water-pipe?" asked Ransom.

"I did," said the Kid. "What of it?"

"The lady's $1000 set of Russian sables went out of the house about the same time you did. The description fits the ones this lady has on."

"To h—Harlem with you," cried the Kid angrily. "You know I've cut out that sort of thing, Ransom. I bought them sables yesterday at——"

The Kid stopped short.

"I know you've been working straight lately," said Ransom. "I'll give you every chance. I'll go with you where you say you bought the furs and investigate. The lady can wear 'em along with us and nobody'll be on. That's fair, Brady."

"Come on," agreed the Kid hotly. And then he stopped suddenly in his tracks and looked with an odd smile at Molly's distressed and anxious face.

"No use," he said grimly. "They're the Hethcote sables, all right. You'll have to turn 'em over, Moll, but they ain't too good for you if they cost a million."

Molly, with anguish in her face, hung upon the Kid's arm.

"Oh, Kiddy, you've broke my heart," she said. "I was so proud of you—and now they'll do you—and where's our happiness gone?"

"Go home," said the Kid wildly. "Come on, Ransom—take the furs. Let's get away from here. Wait a minute—I've a good mind to—no, I'll be d—— if I can do it—run along, Moll—I'm ready, Ransom."

Around the corner of a lumber-yard came Policeman Kohen on his way to his beat along the river. The detective signed to him for assistance. Kohen joined the group. Ransom explained.

"Sure," said Kohen. "I hear about those saples dat vas stole. You say you have dem here?"

Policeman Kohen took the end of Molly's late scarf in his hands and looked at it closely.

"Once," he said, "I sold furs in Sixth Avenue. Yes, dese are saples. Dey come from Alaska. Dis scarf is vort $12 and dis muff——"

"Biff!" came the palm of the Kid's powerful hand upon the policeman's mouth. Kohen staggered and rallied. Molly screamed. The detective threw himself upon Brady and with Kohen's aid got the nippers on his wrist.

"The scarf is vort $12 and the muff is vort $9," persisted the policeman. "Vot is dis talk about $1000 saples?"

The Kid sat upon a pile of lumber and his face turned dark red.

"Correct, Solomonski!" he declared viciously. "I paid $21.50 for the set. I'd rather have got six months and not have told it. Me, the swell guy that wouldn't look at anything cheap! I'm a plain bluffer. Moll—my salary couldn't spell sables in Russian."

Molly cast herself upon his neck.

"What do I care for all the sables and money in the world," she cried. "It's my Kiddy I want. Oh, you dear, stuck-up, crazy blockhead!"

"You can take dose nippers off," said Kohen to the detective. "Before I leaf de station de report come in dat de lady vind her saples—hanging in her wardrobe. Young man, I excuse you dat punch in my vace—dis von time."

Ransom handed Molly her furs. Her eyes were smiling upon the Kid. She wound the scarf and threw the end over her left shoulder with a duchess's grace.

"A gouple of young vools," said Policeman Kohen to Ransom: "come on away."

LOST ON DRESS PARADE

"O. HENRY"

MR. TOWERS CHANDLER was pressing his evening suit in his hall bedroom. One iron was heating on a small gas stove; the other was being pushed vigorously back and forth to make the desirable crease that would be seen later on, extending in straight lines from Mr. Chandler's patent leather shoes to the edge of his low-cut vest. So much of the hero's toilet may be entrusted to our confidence. The remainder may be guessed by those whom genteel poverty has driven to ignoble expedient. Our next view of him shall be as he descends the steps of his lodging-house immaculately and correctly clothed; calm, assured, handsome—in appearance the typical New York young clubman setting out, slightly bored, to inaugurate the pleasures of the evening.

Chandler's honorarium was $18 per week. He was employed in the office of an architect. He was twenty-two years old; he considered architecture to be truly an art; and he honestly believed, though he would not have dared to admit it in New York—that the Flatiron Building was inferior in design to the great cathedral in Milan.

Out of each week's earnings Chandler set aside $1. At the end of each ten weeks, with the extra capital thus accumulated he purchased one gentleman's evening from the bargain counter of stingy old Father Time. He arrayed himself in the regalia of millionaires and presidents; he took himself to the quarter where life is brightest and showiest, and there dined with taste and luxury. With ten dollars a man may, for a few hours, play the wealthy idler to perfection. The sum is ample for a well-considered meal, a bottle bearing a respectable label, commensurate tips, a smoke, cab fare and the ordinary etceteras.

This one delectable evening culled from each dull seventy was to Chandler a source of renascent bliss. To the society bud comes but one debut; it stands alone sweet in her memory when her hair has whitened; but to Chandler each ten weeks brought a joy as keen, as thrilling, as new as the first had been. To sit among bon vivants under palms in the swirl of concealed music, to look upon the habitués of such a paradise and to be looked upon by them—what is a girl's first dance and short-sleeved tulle compared with this?

Up Broadway Chandler moved with the vespertine dress parade. For this evening he was an exhibit as well as a gazer. For the next

sixty-nine evenings he would be dining in cheviot and worsted at dubious table d'hôte, at whirlwind lunch counters, on sandwiches and beer in his hall bedroom. He was willing to do that, for he was a true son of the great city of razzle-dazzle, and to him one evening in the limelight made up for many dark ones.

Chandler protracted his walk until the Forties began to intersect the great and glittering primrose way, for the evening was yet young, and when one is of the beau monde only one day in seventy, one loves to protract the pleasure. Eyes bright, sinister, curious, admiring, provocative, alluring were bent upon him, for his garb and air proclaimed him a devotee to the hour of solace and pleasure.

At a certain corner he came to a standstill, proposing to himself the question of turning back toward the showy and fashionable restaurant in which he usually dined on the evenings of his especial luxury. Just then a girl scudded lightly around the corner, slipped on a patch of icy snow and fell plump upon the sidewalk.

Chandler assisted her to her feet with instant and solicitous courtesy. The girl hobbled to the wall of the building, leaned against it, and thanked him demurely.

" I think my ankle is strained," she said. " It twisted when I fell."

" Does it pain you much ? " inquired Chandler.

" Only when I rest my weight upon it. I think I will be able to walk in a minute or two."

" If I can be of any further service," suggested the young man, " I will call a cab, or——"

" Thank you," said the girl, softly but heartily. " I am sure you need not trouble yourself any further. It was so awkward of me. And my shoe heels are horridly common-sense ; I can't blame them at all."

Chandler looked at the girl and found her swiftly drawing his interest. She was pretty in a refined way ; and her eye was both merry and kind. She was inexpensively clothed in a plain black dress that suggested a sort of uniform such as shop girls wear. Her glossy dark-brown hair showed its coils beneath a cheap hat of black straw whose only ornament was a velvet ribbon and bow. She could have posed as a model for the self-respecting working girl of the best type.

A sudden idea came into the head of the young architect. He would ask this girl to dine with him. Here was the element that his splendid but solitary periodic feasts had lacked. His brief season of elegant luxury would be doubly enjoyable if he could add to it a lady's society. This girl was a lady, he was sure—her manner and speech settled that. And in spite of her extremely plain attire he felt that he would be pleased to sit at table with her.

These thoughts passed swiftly through his mind, and he decided to ask her. It was a breach of etiquette, of course, but oftentimes wage-earning girls waived formalities in matters of this kind. They

were generally shrewd judges of men ; and thought better of their own judgment than they did of useless conventions. His ten dollars, discreetly expended, would enable the two to dine very well indeed. The dinner would no doubt be a wonderful experience thrown into the dull routine of the girl's life ; and her lively appreciation of it would add to his own triumph and pleasure.

" I think," he said to her, with frank gravity, " that your foot needs a longer rest than you suppose. Now, I am going to suggest a way in which you can give it that and at the same time do me a favour. I was on my way to dine all by my lonely self when you came tumbling around the corner. You come with me and we'll have a cozy dinner and a pleasant talk together, and by that time your game ankle will carry you home very nicely, I am sure."

The girl looked quickly up into Chandler's clear, pleasant countenance. Her eyes twinkled once very brightly, and then she smiled ingenuously.

" But we don't know each other—it wouldn't be right, would it ? " she said doubtfully.

" There is nothing wrong about it," said the young man candidly.

" I'll introduce myself—permit me—Mr. Towers Chandler. After our dinner, which I will try to make as pleasant as possible, I will bid you good-evening, or attend you safely to your door, whichever you prefer."

" But, dear me ! " said the girl, with a glance at Chandler's faultless attire. " In this old dress and hat ! "

" Never mind that," said Chandler cheerfully. " I'm sure you look more charming in them than any one we shall see in the most elaborate dinner toilette."

" My ankle does hurt yet," admitted the girl, attempting a limping step. " I think I will accept your invitation, Mr. Chandler. You may call me Miss Marian."

" Come then, Miss Marian," said the young architect gaily, but with perfect courtesy ; " you will not have far to walk. There is a very respectable and good restaurant in the next block. You will have to lean on my arm—so—and walk slowly. It is lonely dining all by one's self. I'm just a little bit glad that you slipped on the ice."

When the two were established at a well-appointed table, with a promising waiter hovering in attendance, Chandler began to experience the real joy that his regular outings always brought to him.

The restaurant was not so showy or pretentious as the one further down Broadway, which he always preferred, but it was nearly so. The tables were well filled with prosperous-looking diners, there was a good orchestra, playing softly enough to make conversation a possible pleasure, and the cuisine and service were beyond criticism. His companion, even in her cheap hat and dress, held herself with

an air that added distinction to the natural beauty of her face and figure. And it is certain that she looked at Chandler, with his animated but self-possessed manner and his kindling and frank blue eyes, with something not far from admiration in her own charming face.

Then it was that the Madness of Manhattan, the Frenzy of Fuss and Feathers, the Bacillus of Brag, the Provincial Plague of Pose seized upon Towers Chandler. He was on Broadway, surrounded by pomp and style, and there were eyes to look at him. On the stage of that comedy he had assumed to play the one-night part of a butterfly of fashion and an idler of means and taste. He was dressed for the part, and all his good angels had not the power to prevent him from acting it.

So he began to prate to Miss Marian of clubs, of teas, of golf and riding and kennels and cotillions and tours abroad, and threw out hints of a yacht lying at Larchmont. He could see that she was vastly impressed by this vague talk, so he endorsed his pose by random insinuations concerning great wealth, and mentioned familiarly a few names that are handled reverently by the proletariat. It was Chandler's short little day, and he was wringing from it the best that could be had, as he saw it. And yet once or twice he saw the pure gold of this girl shine through the mist that his egotism had raised between him and all objects.

"This way of living that you speak of," she said, "sounds so futile and purposeless. Haven't you any work to do in the world that might interest you more?"

"My dear Miss Marian," he exclaimed—"work! Think of dressing every day for dinner, of making half a dozen calls in an afternoon—with a policeman at every corner ready to jump into your auto and take you to the station, if you get up any greater speed than a donkey cart's gait. We do-nothings are the hardest workers in the land."

The dinner was concluded, the waiter generously fed, and the two walked out to the corner where they had met. Miss Marian walked very well now; her limp was scarcely noticeable.

"Thank you for a nice time," she said frankly. "I must run home now. I liked the dinner very much, Mr. Chandler."

He shook hands with her, smiling cordially, and said something about a game of bridge at his club. He watched her for a moment, walking rather rapidly eastward, and then he found a cab to drive him slowly homeward.

In his chilly bedroom Chandler laid away his evening clothes for a sixty-nine days' rest. He went about it thoughtfully.

"That was a stunning girl," he said to himself. "She's all right, too, I'd be sworn, even if she does have to work. Perhaps if I'd told her the truth instead of all that razzle-dazzle we might—but, confound it! I had to play up to my clothes."

Thus spoke the brave who was born and reared in the wigwams of the tribe of the Manhattans.

The girl, after leaving her entertainer, sped swiftly cross-town until she arrived at a handsome and sedate mansion two squares to the east, facing on that avenue which is the highway of Mammon and the auxiliary gods. Here she entered hurriedly and ascended to a room where a handsome young lady in an elaborate house dress was looking anxiously out the window.

"Oh, you madcap!" exclaimed the elder girl, when the other entered. "When will you quit frightening us this way? It is two hours since you ran out in that old rag of a dress and Marie's hat. Mamma has been so alarmed. She sent Louis in the auto to try to find you. You are a bad, thoughtless Puss."

The elder girl touched a button, and a maid came in a moment.

"Marie, tell mamma that Miss Marian has returned."

"Don't scold, sister. I only ran down to Mme. Theo's to tell her to use mauve insertion instead of pink. My costume and Marie's hat were just what I needed. Every one thought I was a shopgirl, I am sure."

"Dinner is over, dear; you stayed so late."

"I know. I slipped on the sidewalk and turned my ankle. I could not walk, so I hobbled into a restaurant and sat there until I was better. That is why I was so long."

The two girls sat in the window seat, looking out at the lights and the stream of hurrying vehicles in the avenue. The younger one cuddled down with her head in her sister's lap.

"We will have to marry some day," she said dreamily—"both of us. We have so much money that we will not be allowed to disappoint the public. Do you want me to tell you the kind of a man I could love, Sis?"

"Go on, you scatterbrain," smiled the other.

"I could love a man with dark and kind blue eyes, who is gentle and respectful to poor girls, who is handsome and good and does not try to flirt. But I could love him only if he had an ambition, an object, some work to do in the world. I would not care how poor he was if I could help him build his way up. But sister, dear, the kind of man we always meet—the man who lives an idle life between society and his clubs—I could not love a man like that, even if his eyes were blue and he were ever so kind to poor girls whom he met in the street."

ROSES, RUSES AND ROMANCE

"O. HENRY"

RAVENEL—Ravenel, the traveller, artist and poet, threw his magazine to the floor. Sammy Brown, broker's clerk, who sat by the window, jumped.

"What is it, Ravvy?" he asked. "The critics been hammering your stock down?"

"Romance is dead," said Ravenel lightly. When Ravenel spoke lightly he was generally serious. He picked up the magazine and fluttered its leaves.

"Even a Philistine, like you, Sammy," said Ravenel seriously (a tone that ensured him to be speaking lightly), "ought to understand. Now, here is a magazine that once printed Poe and Lowell and Whitman and Bret Harte and Du Maurier and Lanier and—well, that gives you the idea. The current number has this literary feast to set before you: an article on the stokers and coal bunkers of battleships, an exposé of the methods employed in making liverwurst, a continued story of a Standard Preferred International Baking Powder deal in Wall Street, a 'poem' on the bear that the President missed, another 'story' by a young woman who spent a week as a spy making overalls on the East Side, another 'fiction' story that reeks of the 'garage' and a certain make of automobile. Of course the title contains the words 'Cupid' and 'Chauffeur'—an article on naval strategy illustrated with cuts of the Spanish Armada, and the new Staten Island ferry-boats; another story of a political boss who won the love of a Fifth Avenue belle by blackening her eye and refusing to vote for an iniquitous ordinance (it doesn't say whether it was in the Street Cleaning Department or Congress), and nineteen pages by the editors bragging about the circulation. The whole thing, Sammy, is an obituary on Romance."

Sammy Brown sat comfortably in the leather armchair by the open window. His suit was a vehement brown with visible checks, beautifully matched in shade by the ends of four cigars that his vest pocket poorly concealed. Light tan were his shoes, grey his socks, sky-blue his apparent linen, snowy and high and adamantine his collar, against which a black butterfly had alighted and spread his wings. Sammy's face—least important—was round and pleasant and pinkish, and in his eyes you saw no haven for fleeing Romance.

That window of Ravenel's apartment opened upon an old garden full of ancient trees and shrubbery. The apartment-house towered above one side of it; a high brick wall fended it from the street; opposite Ravenel's window an old, old mansion stood, half hidden in the shade of the summer foliage. The house was a castle besieged. The city howled and roared and shrieked and beat upon its double doors, and shook white, fluttering cheques above the walls, offering terms of surrender. The grey dust settled upon the trees; the siege was pressed hotter, but the drawbridge was not lowered. No further will the language of chivalry serve. Inside lived an old gentleman who loved his home and did not wish to sell it. That is all the romance of the besieged castle.

Three or four times every week came Sammy Brown to Ravenel's apartment. He belonged to the poet's club, for the former Browns had been conspicuous, though Sammy had been vulgarised by Business. He had no tears for departed Romance. The song of the ticker was the one that reached his heart, and when it came to matters equine and batting scores he was something of a pink edition. He loved to sit in the leather armchair by Ravenel's window. And Ravenel didn't mind particularly. Sammy seemed to enjoy his talk; and then the broker's clerk was such a perfect embodiment of modernity and the day's sordid practicality, that Ravenel rather liked to use him as a scapegoat.

"I'll tell you what's the matter with you," said Sammy, with the shrewdness that business had taught him. "The magazine has turned down some of your poetry stunts. That's why you are so re at it."

"That would be a good guess in Wall Street or in a campaign for the presidency of a woman's club," said Ravenel quietly. "Now, there is a poem—if you will allow me to call it that—of my own in this number of the magazine."

"Read it to me," said Sammy, watching a cloud of pipe-smoke he had just blown out the window.

Ravenel was no greater than Achilles. No one is. There is bound to be a spot. The Somebody-or-Other must take hold of us somewhere when she dips us in the Something-or-Other that makes us invulnerable. He read aloud this verse in the magazine:

"THE FOUR ROSES

"One rose I twined within your hair—
(White rose, that spake for worth);
And one you placed upon your breast—
(Red rose, love's seal of birth).
You plucked another from its stem—
(Tea rose, that means for aye);
And one you gave—that bore for me
The thorns of memory."

"That's a crackerjack," said Sammy admiringly.

"There are five more verses," said Ravenel, patiently sardonic. "One naturally pauses at the end of each. Of course——"

"Oh, let's have the rest, old man," shouted Sammy contritely, "I didn't mean to cut you off. I'm not much of a poetry expert, you know. I never saw a poem that didn't look like it ought to have terminal facilities at the end of every verse. Reel off the rest of it."

Ravenel sighed, and laid the magazine down. "All right," said Sammy cheerfully, "we'll have it next time. I'll be off now. Got a date at five o'clock."

He took a last look at the shaded green garden and left, whistling in an off key an untuneful air from a roofless farce comedy.

The next afternoon Ravenel, while polishing a ragged line of a new sonnet, reclined by the window overlooking the besieged garden of the unmercenary baron. Suddenly he sat up, spilling two rhymes and a syllable or two.

Through the trees one window of the old mansion could be seen clearly. In its window, draped in flowing white, leaned the angel of all his dreams of romance and poesy. Young, fresh as a drop of dew, graceful as a spray of clematis, conferring upon the garden hemmed in by the roaring traffic the air of a princess's bower, beautiful as any flower sung by poet—thus Ravenel saw her for the first time. She lingered for a while, and then disappeared within, leaving a few notes of a birdlike ripple of song to reach his entranced ears through the rattle of cabs and the snarling of the electric cars.

Thus, as if to challenge the poet's flaunt at romance and to punish him for his recreancy to the undying spirit of youth and beauty, this vision had dawned upon him with a thrilling and accusive power. And so metabolic was the power, that in an instant the atoms of Ravenel's entire world were redistributed. The laden drays that passed the house in which she lived rumbled a deep double-bass to the tune of love. The newsboys' shouts were the notes of singing birds; that garden was the pleasance of the Capulets; the janitor was an ogre; himself a knight, ready with sword, lance or lute.

Thus does romance show herself amid forests of brick and stone when she gets lost in the city, and there has to be sent out a general alarm to find her again.

At four in the afternoon Ravenel looked out across the garden. In the window of his hopes were set four small vases, each containing a great, full-blown rose—red and white. And, as he gazed, she leaned above them, shaming them with her loveliness and seeming to direct her eyes pensively toward his own window. And then, as though she had caught his respectful but ardent regard, she melted away, leaving the fragrant emblems on the window-sill.

"Yes, emblems!—he would be unworthy if he had not understood. She had read his poem, 'The Four Roses'; it had reached her heart; and this was its romantic answer. Of course, she must know that Ravenel, the poet, lived across her garden. His picture, too, she must have seen in the magazines. The delicate, tender, modest, flattering message could not be ignored."

Ravenel noticed beside the roses a small flowering-pot containing a plant. Without shame he brought his opera-glasses and employed them from the cover of his window-curtain. A nutmeg geranium!

With the true poetic instinct he dragged a book of useless information from his shelves, and tore open the leaves at "The Language of Flowers."

"Geranium, Nutmeg—I expect a meeting."

So! Romance never does things by halves. If she comes back to you she brings gifts and her knitting, and will sit in your chimney-corner if you will let her.

And now Ravenel smiled. The lover smiles when he thinks he has won. The woman who loves ceases to smile with victory. He ends a battle; she begins hers. What a pretty idea to set the four roses in her window for him to see! She must have a sweet, poetic soul. And now to contrive the meeting.

A whistling and slamming of doors preluded the coming of Sammy Brown.

Ravenel smiled again. Even Sammy Brown was shone upon by the far-flung rays of the renaissance. Sammy, with his ultra clothes, his horseshoe pin, his plump face, his trite slang, his uncomprehending admiration of Ravenel—the broker's clerk made an excellent foil to the new, bright, unseen visitor to the poet's sombre apartment.

Sammy went to his old seat by the window, and looked out over the dusty green foliage in the garden. Then he looked at his watch, and rose hastily.

"By grabs!" he exclaimed. "Twenty after four! I can't stay, old man; I've got a date at 4.30."

"Why did you come, then," asked Ravenel, with sarcastic jocularity, "if you had an engagement at that time? I thought you business men kept better account of your minutes and seconds than that."

Sammy hesitated in the doorway and turned pinker.

"Fact is, Ravvy," he explained, as to a customer whose margin is exhausted, "I didn't know I had it till I came. I'll tell you, old man—there's a dandy girl in that old house next door that I'm dead gone on. I put it straight—we're engaged. The old man says 'nit'—but that don't go. He keeps her pretty close. I can see Edith's window from yours here. She gives me a tip when she's going shopping, and I meet her. It's 4.30 to-day. Maybe I ought to have explained sooner, but I know it's all right with you—so long."

"How do you get your 'tip,' as you call it?" asked Ravenel, losing a little spontaneity from his smile.

"Roses," said Sammy briefly. "Four of 'em to-day. Means four o'clock at the corner of Broadway and Twenty-third."

"But the geranium?" persisted Ravenel, clutching at the end of flying Romance's trailing robe.

"Means half-past," shouted Sammy from the hall. "See you to-morrow."

"LITTLE SPECK IN GARNERED FRUIT"

"O. HENRY"

THE honeymoon was at its full. There was a flat with the reddest of new carpets, tasselled portières and six steins with pewter lids arranged on a ledge above the wainscoting of the dining-room. The wonder of it was yet upon them. Neither of them had ever seen a yellow primrose by the river's brim ; but if such a sight had met their eyes at that time it would have seemed like—well, whatever the poet expected the right kind of people to see in it besides a primrose.

The bride sat in the rocker with her feet resting upon the world. She was wrapt in rosy dreams and kimono of the same hue. She wondered what the people in Greenland and Tasmania and Baluchistan were saying one to another about her marriage to Kid McGarry. Not that it made any difference. There was no welterweight from London to the Southern Cross that could stand up four hours—no ; four rounds—with her bridegroom. And he had been hers for three weeks ; and the crook of her little finger could sway him more than the fist of any 142-pounder in the world.

Love, when it is ours, is the other name for self-abnegation and sacrifice. When it belongs to people across the airshaft it means arrogance and self-conceit.

The bride crossed her Oxfords and looked thoughtfully at the distemper Cupids on the ceiling.

"Precious," said she, with the air of Cleopatra asking Antony for Rome done up in tissue paper and delivered at residence, "I think I would like a peach."

Kid McGarry arose and put on his coat and hat. He was serious, shaven, sentimental, and spry.

"All right," said he, as coolly as though he were only agreeing to sign articles to fight the champion of England. "I'll step down and cop one out for you—see ? "

"Don't be long," said the bride. "I'll be lonesome without my naughty boy. Get a nice, ripe one."

After a series of farewells that would have befitted an imminent voyage to foreign parts, the Kid went down to the street.

Here he not unreasonably hesitated, for the season was yet early

spring, and there seemed small chance of wresting anywhere from those chill streets and stores the coveted luscious guerdon of summer's golden prime.

At the Italian's fruit-stand on the corner he stopped and cast a contemptuous eye over the display of papered oranges, highly polished apples and wan, sun-hungry bananas.

"Gotta da peach? asked the Kid in the tongue of Dante, the lover of lovers.

"Ah, no," sighed the vender. "Not for one mont com-a da peach. Too soon. Gotta da nice-a orange. Like-a da orange?"

Scornful, the Kid pursued his quest. He entered the all-night chop-house, café, and bowling-alley of his friend and admirer, Justus O'Callahan. The O'Callahan was about in his institution, looking for leaks.

"I want it straight," said the Kid to him. "The old woman has got a hunch that she wants a peach. Now, if you've got a peach, Cal, get it out quick. I want it and others like it if you've got 'em in plural quantities."

"The house is yours," said O'Callahan. "But there's no peach in it. It's too soon. I don't suppose you could even find 'em at one of the Broadway joints. That's too bad. When a lady fixes her mouth for a certain kind of fruit nothing else won't do. It's too late now to find any of the first-class fruiterers open. But if you think the missis would like some nice oranges, I've just got a box of fine ones in that she might——"

"Much obliged, Cal. It's a peach proposition right from the ring of the gong. I'll try farther."

The time was nearly midnight as the Kid walked down the West-Side avenue. Few stores were open, and such as were practically hooted at the idea of a peach.

But in her moated flat the bride confidently awaited her Persian fruit. A champion welter-weight not find a peach?—not stride triumphantly over the seasons and the zodiac and the almanac to fetch an Amsden's June or a Georgia cling to his owny-own?

The Kid's eye caught sight of a window that was lighted and gorgeous with Nature's most entrancing colours. The light suddenly went out. The Kid sprinted and caught the fruiterer locking his door.

"Peaches?" said he, with extreme deliberation.

"Well, no, sir. Not for three or four weeks yet. I haven't any idea where you might find some. There may be a few in town from under the glass, but they'd be hard to locate. Maybe at one of the more expensive hotels—some place where there's plenty of money to waste. I've got some very fine oranges, though—from a ship-load that came in to-day."

The Kid lingered on the corner for a moment, and then set out briskly toward a pair of green lights that flanked the steps of a

building down a dark side street.

"Captain around anywhere?" he asked of the desk sergeant of the police station.

At that moment the Captain came briskly forward from the rear. He was in plain clothes, and had a busy air.

"Hello, Kid," he said to the pugilist. "Thought you were bridal-touring."

"Got back yesterday. I'm a solid citizen now. Think I'll take an interest in municipal doings. How would it suit you to get into Denver Dick's place to-night, Cap?"

"Past performances," said the Captain, twisting his moustache. "Denver was closed up two months ago."

"Correct," said the Kid. "Rafferty chased him out of the Forty-third. He's running in your precinct now, and his game's bigger than ever. I'm down on this gambling business. I can put you against his game."

"In my precinct?" growled the Captain. "Are you sure, Kid? I'll take it as a favour. Have you got the entrée? How is it to be done?"

"Hammers," said the Kid. "They haven't got any steel on the doors yet. You'll need ten men. No; they won't let me in the place. Denver has been trying to do me. He thought I tipped him off for the other raid. I didn't though. You want to hurry. I've got to get back home. The house is only three blocks from here."

Before ten minutes had sped the Captain with a dozen men stole with their guide into the hallway of a dark and virtuous-looking building in which many businesses were conducted by day.

"Third floor, rear," said the Kid softly. "I'll lead the way."

Two axemen faced the door that he pointed out to them.

"It seems all quiet," said the Captain doubtfully. "Are you sure your tip is straight?"

"Cut away!" said the Kid. "It's on me if it ain't."

The axes crashed through the as yet unprotected door. A blaze of light from within poured through the smashed panels. The door fell, and the raiders sprang into the room with their guns handy.

The big room was furnished with the gaudy magnificence dear to Denver Dick's western ideas. Various well-patronised games were in progress. About fifty men who were in the room rushed upon the police in a grand break for personal liberty. The plain-clothes men had to do a little club-swinging. More than half the patrons escaped.

Denver Dick had graced his game with his own presence that night. He led the rush that was intended to sweep away the smaller body of raiders. But when he saw the Kid his manner became personal. Being in the heavyweight class, he cast himself joyfully upon his slighter enemy, and they rolled down a flight of stairs in

each other's arms. On the landing they separated and arose, and then the Kid was able to use some of his professional tactics, which had been useless to him while in the excited clutch of a 200-pound sporting gentleman who was about to lose $20,000 worth of paraphernalia.

After vanquishing his adversary, the Kid hurried upstairs and through the gambling-room into a smaller apartment connecting by an arched doorway.

Here was a long table set with choicest chinaware and silver, and lavishly furnished with food of that expensive and spectacular sort of which the devotees of sport are supposed to be fond. Here again was to be perceived the liberal and florid taste of the gentleman with the urban cognomenal prefix.

A No. 10 patent-leather shoe protruded a few of its inches outside the tablecloth along the floor. The Kid seized this, and plucked forth a black man in a white tie and the garb of a servitor.

"Get up!" commanded the Kid. "Are you in charge of this free lunch?"

"Yes, sah, I was. Has they done pinched us ag'in, boss?"

"Looks that way. Listen to me. Are there any peaches in this lay-out? If there ain't I'll have to throw up the sponge."

"There was three dozen, sah, when the game opened this evinin'; but I reckon the gentlemen done eat 'em all up. If you'd like to eat a fust-rate orange, sah, I kin find you some."

"Get busy," ordered the Kid sternly, "and move whatever peach crop you've got quick, or there'll be trouble. If anybody oranges me again to-night, I'll knock his face off."

The raid on Denver Dick's high-priced and prodigal luncheon revealed one lone, last peach that had escaped the epicurean jaws of the followers of chance. Into the Kid's pocket it went, and that indefatigable forager departed immediately with his prize. With scarcely a glance at the scene on the sidewalk below, where the officers were loading their prisoners into the patrol wagons, he moved homeward with long, swift strides.

His heart was light as he went. So rode the knights back to Camelot after perils and high deeds done for their ladies fair. The Kid's lady had commanded him and he had obeyed. True, it was but a peach that she had craved; but it had been no small deed to glean a peach at midnight from that wintry city where yet the February snows lay like iron. She had asked for a peach; she was his bride; in his pocket the peach was warming in his hand that held it for fear that it might fall out and be lost.

On the way the Kid turned in at an all-night drug store and said to the spectacled clerk:

"Say, sport, I wish you'd size up this rib of mine and see if it's broke. I was in a little scrap, and bumped down a flight or two of stairs."

The druggist made an examination.

"It isn't broken," was his diagnosis; "but you have a bruise there that looks like you'd fallen off the Flatiron twice."

"That's all right," said the Kid. "Let's have your clothes-brush, please."

The bride waited in the rosy glow of the pink lamp-shade. The miracles were not all passed away. By breathing a desire for some slight thing—a flower, a pomegranate, a—oh, yes, a peach—she could send forth her man into the night, into the world which could not withstand him, and he would do her bidding.

And now he stood by her chair and laid the peach in her hand.

"Naughty boy!" she said fondly. "Did I say a peach? I think I would much rather have had an orange."

Blest be the bride.

JAMES BRENDAN CONNOLLY

B. 1868

THE MAGNETIC HEARTH

"Clancy was laying his course that day,
Clipping it out o' Fortune Bay——"

and so on to the further details, the fifteen hundred barrels of frozen herring in his hold, and a breeze that sang lullabies of home, when one of his crew had to fall sick.

"And of all times!" exploded his mates. "The first cargo of the season; and now Glover'll beat us out—ready to sail when we left."

But there was nothing for it but to put back to St. Mary's and ship another man in his place.

The new man was but fairly over the rail—Man! but the jaunty chap he was!—when he had to break out with: "So this is the Tommie Clancy I've been hearing so much about? The great Tommie Clancy—Clancy the sail carrier! Well, I've yet to see the man that could carry sail enough for me."

Of course that was too good for the crew to keep; and while they were getting under way again they started to tell the skipper of what the new man had said, thinking to touch his professional pride and sting him to one of his famous rejoinders, perhaps set him to teach the fellow a lesson. But they were grievously disappointed. He did not let them half finish. "To the devil with what he said!" exploded the irate Clancy. He had only himself just leaped aboard, after seeing the sick man attended to ashore. "Look now!" and held up a letter. "Ought to have been given me a week ago. Only I stepped into the post-office on the way down, I'd never got it at all. If I'd got it when I ought to, we'd been half-way home by now, with that sick man taking his chances out of the medicine-chest. And more than that," and he held aloft a telegram, although, instead of telling them what that was about, he thrust it into an inside pocket.

"Hush!" warned one, a subtle one, a man who had essayed to report the new man's words about sail-carrying. "Maybe he's put out about Glover, who left for home last night," meaning it to reach the skipper's ears, which it did.

"To the devil with Glover!" said Clancy. "We won't be home any later because he's left before us."

"But the market, skipper?"

"To hell with the market, too—what's the matter with that anchor? Is that anchor cat-headed yet? No? Well, why isn't it? And another heave or two on those throat-halyards. And, Lord in heaven! bend your backs. Some o' you act as though you thought you were pulling on pack-threads."

And in that spirit they left for home. At dark they had sunk the headlands of Cannargie, at dawn they raised the cliffs of Whitehead, which truly was going some, as Sam Leary put it when after an arduous trick to the wheel he dropped below, dodging, as he leaped from the lowest step, the heavy steel stays which held the *Duncan* together forward. "Them damn things—some day they'll cut a man's head off coming below in a hurry."

"I cal'late by the way she's hoppin', Sammie, that it's blowin' some."

This from the cook.

"Go up and have a look for yourself, cookie. *Some* water on her deck."

"No need to go on deck to see loose water, Sam. I c'n get that here. I wish she was a little tighter. There's blessed little comfort wearin' rubber boots all the time below. Don't you think she's a bit loose for a winter passage, Sammie? Look at them things, now."

He pointed to the heavy strengthening stays which Sam had dodged, and which stretched across the forec's'le just abaft the butt of the foremast.

These rods, to which Sam had already referred, and of an X form, extended from side to side of the vessel. If it were not for them the *Duncan*, a notoriously hard-driven vessel, would (or so common report had it) have long ago ended her career. To stiffen further the *Duncan*, it may be added that she was also hooped by iron bands outside her hull; the same extending from chain-plates to chain-plates forward. Even as the men gazed, the steel stays, which crossed at the foremast, were quivering under the impact which came of the vessel plunging into heavy seas before an immense press of canvas.

"Some day, Sammie, them rods'll part, and then she'll split in two like a Boston cracker and down she'll go the farther from the cook."

"If, instead of swearing at them so much, cook, you'd once in a while take a marlinspike to the turnbuckle and screw 'em a little tighter—" Sam followed his own advice. "There; that looks better."

"But she *is* loose, Sammie."

"Loose? Of course she's loose. But that's no fault of hers. Look back at the passages she's made. Sure 'tisn't in nature for a vessel to be driven as this man's driven this one for years now and

she not be loose. But that only affects a vessel's comfort. For sailin' 'tis no harm. Indeed, 'tis notorious that a loose vessel sails fastest."

" H-m-m—then this one ought to be about the fastest thing that ever wiped her nose in a winter westerly."

" And so she is. I'd hate to say what I think she's logging now, for fear of what you'd call me. But what odds if she is loose, so she's standin' up well? And she's standin' up—well enough to carry her mains'l anyway, and all the vessels that's carryin' a whole mains'l here-away to-day c'n be counted on the thumbs of a one-armed man, I'll bet."

" And no slack now, Sammie, till he's home, I s'pose? "

" Slack? Slack? " Leary looked into the cook's face to assure himself no joke was meant. " This man slack on a passage home? Well, if—there goes another bunch of crockery, cookie. You ought to know better than leave them around so careless—and the way this vessel's bein' jolted. If I know him, he's got a picture in his eye now of cradles and babies and a lone woman by the fire. No, sir, if it was blowin' 16-inch guns out of the water he wouldn't slack now."

And never a slack did Clancy think of. Cruel it certainly seemed. Wind just forward of her beam then, and so allowing of sheet enough to keep all the bouncing life in her. And the sea? She was picking it up over her knightheads and passing it along deck, smothering hatches, house, and wheel-box, and over the taffrail roaring.

" Like an express train on the other track," said the next man off watch after Leary. " Honest, I caught myself looking back at her wake to see if I couldn't see the cars going out of sight around the curve. Man! if she don't bust all the records this trip! "

And that started them to figuring out how long before she would be here, there, and finally into Gloucester, which is known of any old Gloucester fishermen to be the surest way to discount any good luck in store. It was only inevitable then, that the vengeful wind should jump to the westward. The skipper was the first to note the veering, and it was, " Blast your hoary old face!—can't you stay with a man in a hurry for two days running? " And to the man at the wheel then, " Let her come about, and don't trip her, either."

Almost to Sable Island Northwest Light it was on that tack. Abreast of Cape Sable they hoped it would be on the inshore tack. But no; the wind headed them off again and developed into a westerly hurricane, of which, between one tack and the other, they got thirty hours, she reeling off her express speed under four lowers the meantime. It was then her planks first gave warning. Clancy was not deaf to the indications. " But no fear; she won't give in. I never could make her give in. She'll keep going, this one, till the planks are torn from her frame. That's the spirit of her. But here's

this devil's breeze heading us off again."

It was on that next tack she showed herself the wonderful vessel altogether. And Clancy standing right there to see her.

"Did you ever see her like?" he asked, and so fired with admiration of her that—she was carrying her four lowers then—he thought to try her with the staysail. And did. And she stood up under that; not without some further creaking and groaning of her joints, it is true, but still right side up. "M-m!" murmured Clancy, in sheer admiration, and after that gave her the balloon. Blue times it was then, spume and foam and a clawing sea—a great occasion altogether. Grand, yes—life well worth living; and then—it was the forward watch who, thinking he heard an unusual gurgling overboard, stuck his head over her windward bow. And immediately hopped back with warning arms: "Skipper! oh, skipper, she's all opened up for-ard!"

"Then slap it to her on the other tack," said Clancy, and never even smiled, for the madness of making a passage was on him.

And while on that other tack came a glorious south-easterly, and riotous joy prevailed aboard the *Duncan*. A south-easterly gale for homebound vessels, especially in winter! It is a softening, albeit at times a howling influence. Particularly does it add to the joy of man when it follows a hard westerly, serving then to melt the ice. And straight down the Cape shore went the *Duncan* before it, while Tommie Clancy, standing on her quarter, smiled the smile of a boy with a slice of bread and molasses. To Sam Leary's query, "Will you beat him out?" he asked, "Beat who out?"

"Why, Glover."

"Oh, him! Twelve hours' start? I don't know. And what's more, Sammie, I don't know's I care. We're sailing now, that's sure," and the frequent seas threatening to overhaul and smother her, he took the wheel himself; and for fourteen hours stood to it, lifting a hand from the spokes only to gulp down the cups of hot coffee which were brought when chance offered. And sang little songs to himself the while—songs of home, and hearth, and wife, and children—songs the Celtic people sing as the mother rocks the babies, the fathers as they meditate on life, death, and what comes after.

In the milder spells of that run the water on her quarter piled to Clancy's thighs, but later it came to his waist; and there was one inspiring stretch of four hours when the solid water came boiling to his breast. And a man of sweeping height was Clancy. She must have been a sight to please the gods; certainly she was a joy to all she met along the way. They breasted a fleet of outbound trawlers hove to inside La Have, under double-reefed foresails all. To the rail of one, the *Buccaneer*, stood Crump Taylor.

"What is it?" hailed Crump.

"I don't know," yelled back Tommie, "but I'll know before a

great while an' this breeze holds out."

"Well, what's your hurry?" asked the master of the next one, which herself rocked to the sea's surge till her fore-keel could be seen to the waist.

"Oh, no great hurry—just going to the west'ard," retorted Clancy.

"Excuse *me*!" said that one.

"Drive her!" yelled the next. On the *Duncan* they couldn't hear the words, so rapidly was she sweeping by; but they knew what he meant by the swishing sweep of his oil-clothed arm.

Not until they rounded Cape Sable and were getting the wind fair abeam did Clancy give over the wheel. After three days and nights on his feet he was beginning to feel the need of rest. It was three o'clock in the morning then.

"Keep her as she is—nothing to. If anything, keep her off. If I don't wake before, call me at seven," and turned in on the lockers.

But they didn't have to call him, for in his sleep he felt the unusual motion. He rolled to his side and waited. A moment and she came up almost standing; another moment and she was tearing away. A minute or two and she was brought up again; another and she was off. Clancy stood up. The clock indicated a few minutes after six. Two or three of the crew, expecting the call to coffee—there had been no table since the beginning of the westerly—were already sitting around on the lockers. Again she fetched up, and again she was off again.

"How's it above?" asked Clancy.

"'Bout the same; maybe a breath more wind, if anything."

"Has it been going on for long, that luffing?"

"Since this man's had the wheel."

The unusual readiness to fix the blame arrested Clancy's attention. Forgetfully he lowered his head to look up the companion-way to see who it was; but the boards which two days before had been set up to keep the deck water from the cabin were still there, and the man to the wheel could not be seen.

"And who is it?"

They were more than willing to tell him. "It's the sail-carrier you shipped in Fortune Bay."

"Oh-h——"

"And now that he's to the wheel, his eyes are white with fear of the world to come."

Clancy said nothing, but presently went on deck; and there stood by the wheel and casually observed the progress of things. No getting around it, 'twas a wild-looking morning for a vessel to be carrying all the sail she had in her locker.

With the master at his side the new man kept his nerve for perhaps five minutes, by which time he could stand it no more. In the face of a mountainous sea that looked as if it was surely going

to engulf them, he hurriedly put down the wheel. Even while the wave was sweeping her decks, ere yet it had passed on, with its grand backwash receding musically down her sloping deck, Clancy was warning his helmsman.

"Don't do that. Keep her to the course—nothing to. If anything, keep her off. A good full always to keep the life in her. That kind of work discourages a vessel; she's going home, mind."

"Yes, sir," and on her course again was the *Duncan* put. And for perhaps another five minutes the new man held her to it; but the prospect proving too much for him, again he luffed her.

Clancy laid a gentle arm on the wheelsman's shoulder and spoke softly.

"I told you not to do that, and you mustn't. Don't do it again. This one's a little loose maybe, but she'll take all you can give her. I know her better than you, mind, and I'm telling you to trust her. And even if she wasn't reliable, which she is, mind—this is no time for jogging. We're going home, going home, boy, and a good full's what she wants."

After that Clancy thought the man was cured. But no. Five minutes perhaps and again she was luffed.

Clancy laid a hand on the wheel. "You needn't bother about steering any more. I'll stand your watch out, and do you go below. And if you'll take my advice, and no offence meant, when you get to Gloucester you'll take to farming; for cert'nly the Lord never intended you for a fisherman."

Be sure they heard that below—an ear to the binnacle-box assured it; and when he came below among them furtive glances stole around the company. But like gentlemen, they said never a word. Nor did he then; only sat down on a locker and drew off his oilskins, first his jacket and trousers, then followed his jack-boots, wearily, and got into his slipshods, after which he reached back and from under the mattress of his bunk drew out a plug of tobacco and rolled it in the palms of his hands, and filled his pipe, and stretched his feet then toward the stove.

In which position he smoked meditatively, and, after a while—puff—puff—and a great sigh: "Well, I've crossed the Bay of Fundy a hundred times, but this is the first time ever I crossed under water."

The disrated helmsman's mate was at that time forward, considering how foolish it was to attempt to stand watch at all. He was making no pretension to look out; simply curled up and waited for his hour to come to an end.

"And I might's well been below for all the good I was doing," he explained when he did get below. "Might as well lock her up forward and let her go her way, for it's nothing but a solid ledge of clear white water ahead of her, and into that she's everlastin'ly pilin'."

"And how's the skipper? Looking tired yet?"

"Him tired? And the vessel goin' to the west'ard! Man! he's just beginnin' to beam!"

"Still singin' the little songs to himself, rhymin' as he goes along?"

"Ay, still singin',

> "West half no'the and drive her, we're abreast now of Cape Sable,
> 'Tis an everlastin' hurricane, but here's the craft that's able"—

singin' away, and his eyes shinin' like Thacher's after you've come a passage from Flemish Cap."

The prospect by and by moved Sam Leary to ascend to the deck, where his eyes at once caught a faint column of smoke. "That the Yarmouth steamer, skipper, down to le'ward?"

"That's the old lady, Sam. Raised her at seven o'clock this morning, and by twelve o'clock—the way we're sliding along now—we'll have rubbed even that blotch of smoke off the skyline, Sam."

"And they say she averages her fourteen knots one year's end to the other? Well, that's tearin' 'em off some."

He took a fresh grip of the weather-rigging and gazed with yet more respectful interest at her deck. "Lord! Lord! loose as cinders and fair leapin' for home. And—hullo, what! Thacher's already? Lord! skipper, but she's cert'nly been pushin' the suds out of her way. I'll bet you were glad to see 'em." He nodded to the twin shafts ahead.

"I could kiss the whitewashed stones of 'em, Sammie. And here"—Clancy slipped the life-line from about his body—"here, Sam, and mind you keep her going."

They kept her going with never a slack till she was safe to the dock; and up to the dock, ere yet her lines were fast or her lowering sails down, Clancy flew.

A dozen would have stopped him. By their smiles he knew that he had brought home the first load of frozen herring of the season; but small glory in that for him now. All along the coast when around his lashed body the green seas curled 'twas not of herring, or bonus, or anything with the mark of money on it that was holding thrall his fancy. The *Duncan* herself could hardly have taken longer leaps before the gale than did Clancy up the dock.

An empty buggy, with a sleepy-looking horse between the shafts, was standing before the door of an office at the head of the wharf. A boy was huddled on some steps near by.

"Whose gear?" asked Clancy, who by then was on the seat and reaching for a whip.

"Belongs to a runner selling fish-hooks inside."

"Well, tell him I took it when he comes out. Chk-chk—get up, you fat loafer!"

"Oh, Captain—oh, Captain!" the owner called from the door-

way of an office, but he called too late. Up the street a plump, astonished horse was flying with a rattling buggy, and a cloud of dust in his wake. Through the streets of Gloucester went Clancy; gybed a corner, then went for fair sailing on a straight stretch; another corner, a beat up an incline, one more corner and another fine straight stretch, and then fetched up all standing, with the sides of the poor beast shaking like a mainsail in the wind.

Fifty yards away was Clancy's home. But he did not go clattering to that; the courage of him was now failing. He slacked down, halted even, and, leaning a hand against a tree before the door, drew a full breath or two. So much could happen in a week! At the door he tried to fit the key to the lock, but it would not turn. The cold sweat came over him. What did it mean? He tried again. Still no turn. He tried the knob then—and the door opened. It hadn't been locked at all. And then he remembered: "There'll be no lock on the door, Tommie, once I hear you are on the way home. Night or day you won't have to stop to open the lock."

Perhaps all was well after all. He stepped into the hall. Hearing a noise in the kitchen, he headed that way. Maybe—but no; it was the old helper. Before he could reach her he heard her, talking to herself, as was her habit.

"Tea and toast," she was saying. "Mustn't cut the slices too thick for toast—tea and toast for the poor creature!"

"And who's the poor creature? How is she?"

The old woman started and turned at the sound of that hoarse voice.

"Oh, Captain Clancy!"

"And how is she?"

"Oh, but the lovely baby boy—the day after we sent the telegram."

Clancy gripped the door-frame and came nigher to the old woman.

"But Ann?"

"Man alive, have no fear! Would I be standing with a quiet mind here and the poor girl not well? She's sitting up to-day."

He started to say something, but his tongue would not act.

"Upstairs—in her room?" he managed to whisper at length.

The old woman smiled and nodded.

"I must go up—but wait. I mustn't make any noise, must I? Don't tell her—don't call. I want myself to bring the first word. She'll like it better."

"Yes, and more than the word, she'll like the man that brings it. And go soon, Captain, for there's that in your eyes would win queens from their thrones."

Clancy removed his boots, the same great boots that till now had not been drawn from his feet since he had left Newfoundland. Upstairs he crept. A sound, well-built house it was, and the stairs

did not creak under his weight. As he went up he heard her voice crooning softly. Changed it was, with new tones in it, but still her own voice always—no other voice like it. She was singing now; and on the landing, with the half-open door of her room no more than an arm's length away, he stopped and listened. And, listening, waited, wondering curiously just why he waited. Night and day he had been driving—snow, ice, hail, gales of wind, and great seas—and during it all but one thought, to be where he was now. A hundred times he had pictured himself bounding up the stairs and into her arms. Yet now that he was here, he was waiting; now that he was so near, he lacked the courage to go in. And even while he hesitated the dear voice broke into a new song:

> "Home to his sweetheart your father is sweeping,
> Home through the gale his brave vessel is leaping,
> Home through the foam of the turbulent ocean,
> Over the shoals, over the knolls, over the wild western ocean to thee."

He waited no longer, and as through the door he had heard, so now in the doorway she saw him. And her face! He clasped her; mother and baby, he clasped them both, and pride as well as love rang in his voice.

"Ann, Ann, but where's the man that wouldn't carry sail for you!"

"Tommie—Tommie—home again!" and laid the baby in his arms and cried on his breast.

Harry Glover got home that night. His crew lost no time in getting ashore. It had been a notable passage, and they were wistful to ease the strain and to boast of some pretty fair work against a hard westerly along the way. And did boast, until they heard that Clancy was in before them.

"Well, I'm damned!" it was with them then—with all of them, that is, but Steve Clifford.

Clifford met Sam Leary along the way.

"I half expected it, Sam, as the rest of the crew'll tell you. We were passing the fleet anchored on La Have. They hailed out something we couldn't quite get. But the skipper thought it was something in praise of the sail he was carrying. He had her under four lowers then and was some proud. He called to me, knowing I'd been with Clancy a few trips. 'Where's your *Johnnie Duncan*?' he says—'where's Tommie Clancy and your *Johnnie Duncan* at this writing, do you s'pose?"

"'Where?' says I. 'Well, if I know Tommie Clancy and the *Johnnie Duncan*, she's playin' leap-frog across the Bay o' Fundy by this time'—ho! ho! so help me, Sam—playing leap-frog across the Bay of Fundy—yes. And he'd liked to kill me then—yes."

Later still Clancy met Glover—Glover the Diplomat, but with curious streaks of good nature in him. Clancy, with a package under

one arm, was running like a little boy whose mother has sent him on an errand and told him to make haste. He had been to the drug-store, he explained, for a bottle of peptonised something or other.

"Tommie," said Glover, "what d' y' say to a little touch?"

"No time, Harry now."

"Oh, make time. You ought to after that passage. No? Not even one for the baby?"

"Who told you about him?"

"Oh, forty people. And I hear he's a wonder, too."

"Well, I don't know but what I will have a little touch—just one. And, Harry, as God is my judge"—Clancy in a rapture held his free arm aloft—"he grips my moustache only just now, and d' y' think I could make him let go? Not him. Man! but what a grip he'll have for a wheel if ever he lives to grow up and has to go fishing."

"Let's hope he'll never have to go fishing."

"There you said it, Harry." Clancy laid the free arm on Glover's.

"No, let's hope he won't. It'll do for us, but not for our children. But if he does, and if ever he takes his mains'l in to any—"

"If he does he'll be no boy of yours, Tommie. And so he'll never take it in to any that's afloat. And now, Tommie, before we drink the boy's health—that bet I made with you just before we left on the passage—"

"That, Harry? And we drinking to the boy? Why, it's the next thing to a christening! No, put your money back."

"But what'll I do with it?"

"Lord! I don't care what you do with it. Heave it overboard, or buy bait with it, or give it to the foreign missions. I know I don't want it, nor won't take it. Here's to the boy—and the mother—God bless her!—that bore him."

ALEXANDER HARVEY

B. 1868

THE RAFT

"DON'T kill one of the others," he said. "Kill me. I am not so starved as they."

"Griggs," I replied, "has begged me to kill him first."

The emaciated passenger turned as I said the words and shot a look at Griggs. The twelve days we had spent on that raft in the trackless ocean had set the seal of starvation upon each of us, although the young woman bore it best, but Griggs had suffered unspeakably.

He was prostrate against the solitary water barrel which a rain had filled the night before. But for that Griggs must have died, surely. The girl was holding the wet end of a rag to his lips.

"I suppose," I said, slowly, and with pain, for the long-drawn-out agony of thirst and starvation seemed to have affected my throat most of all, "I suppose there's no use hoping for land or a sail."

Before the starving man could reply, the girl had made her way to where we crouched. The sea was running high, but she did not crawl when she moved about, as did the rest of us.

"I know what you men have been talking about these two days," she said.

There she paused. So weak was this young creature from lack of food and drink that her voice was the merest whisper. I wanted to support her with an arm, but my weakness had grown upon me since the last biscuit was eaten, and I could do no more than get up on my hands and knees. I felt dizzy.

"Can we not," she said, "wait another day before any one is killed and eaten?"

"You've made us wait two days as it is," I managed to answer. "Another twenty-four hours of this and there won't be any of us alive to eat at all. That's why I want to be killed and eaten here and now."

I sank back to the board that had been my bed for so many hungry hours. I had not spoken so much for a week. The effort tried me like felling timber.

The girl put her skinny elbow beneath my head and placed her lips against my ear.

" I've saved a mouthful of bread for you," she whispered.

The next moment there was a running stream down the inside of my cheeks, like a flood. The feeling had been brought on by the bit of food the girl had put stealthily on the end of my tongue. I nearly gasped as I moved that bite of crust into the side of my jaw where my teeth came down upon it like sledge-hammers. I chewed furtively two or three times, for I was afraid to let them see me do it. Not that they would have fallen upon me. They were all too weak. But I knew that the sight of me eating a lump of bread would prove to my companions on that raft as tormenting as fire and faggot.

The girl had left my side and was now standing beside the Dutch cook. I could not see his face, but the sight of her lips close to the big, hairy ear gave me an idea.

" Jinks ! " I whispered as loudly as I could.

The emaciated passenger who had begged me to kill him turned his gaunt eyes upon me when he heard his name.

" That girl gave you a mouthful of bread yesterday when she whispered in your ear."

He bent his head.

" She's just give me a mouthful of bread. I believe she's giving the cook a mouthful now."

We both looked over towards the sea chest against which the cook's head was propped. The girl had crossed the raft to where the improvised mast bore its fluttering signal of distress, but the cook was furtively chewing a mouthful.

I crawled upon my hands and knees to where the girl was.

" I'll kill the next man you feed," I said. " Eat your bread yourself."

" You got the last mouthful," she said.

Never a suspicion that she might be lying crossed my mind. I paid no more attention to the girl. My mind was obsessed by another notion. I thought I would swoon as I retraced my path to where Jinks was lying.

" Say ! " I said hoarsely, " you say you're willing to die to make a meal for the rest of us ? "

" My God, yes ! "

" How are we going to kill you ? "

Jinks stared wildly about. There were two blunt knives aboard and an axe. I took no stock in the axe. Not one of us had the strength left to lift it. The knives were too blunt to be of use in opening a vein, for the simple reason that every man on the raft had been brought so low by hunger and weakness that he could not have pressed it even against his own skinny wrist.

" I'll tie a handkerchief about my throat and stangle," said Jinks.

He had the knot tied in a jiffy, but he was too weak to pull with enough energy for strangulation. He gave up in five minutes and lay still.

But the procedure of Jinks had given me a suggestion. I crawled over to the one bit of rope still with us. It bound the timbers of the raft we had hastily constructed when the ship went down. But try as I might, it was too strongly knotted to be unloosed by any effort of a starving man.

Here was a crisis, indeed. Our one hope of life was the slaughter of a man, but here were we too weak from loss of food and drink to be capable of murder.

"Mr. Blake!"

Starved though I was, I almost started up. The girl's lips were once more at my ear.

"I must tell you something," she gasped.

Her long hair fell in a cascade about my face. She turned to look at the others behind me, as if she were fearful of some secret of which she might be sole guardian. In another moment I knew what the secret was, because she bent her head over mine and kissed my lips.

How cool her mouth was! It was like a long, cold drink.

"Now you know," she whispered. "I love you. Wait one more day for me."

In another minute she was making her way back to the cook's side. I saw her dip her rag into the flowing sea and swab his horrible feet as he lay against the sea chest. But I thought no more of death.

Slowly and heavily the burning sun dropped into the waters far beyond the sky. Out peered the stars. The starving men all about me lay like logs of the raft that bore them on, on. I could barely discern the shadows we made as midnight drew forward and brought the moon up the sky.

"Blake!"

I turned my head slowly at this whisper of my name. It was Griggs.

"Let us hang on another day," he whispered. Then he swooned.

"Yes," I whispered, in an hour, when he recovered consciousness. "Let us hang on."

I no longer remembered, as I said the words, that our last bite of food had gone down our throats the day before; that our last few pints of water were in the barrel beneath the mast. I would live for love. Griggs crawled back to where the cook lay.

"My darling!"

I barely caught the whisper, but I had seen her coming and the sight revived me. I tried to put an arm about her waist, but only a hand reached hers.

"Dearest," she whispered, "don't let them see us."

She had kissed my lips and gone before I could utter a word. It was as well, for in a moment more I was looking into the glaring eyes of Jinks.

"We'll wait another day," he said; "another day before I die to feed you all."

His face was withdrawn, but I had not the strength to gaze after his retreating figure. Nor did I think of death any more. My mind ran on that devoted girl. How pretty she seemed among the starving thirty of us! Would she come back and kiss me once again? I managed to lift my head from the bottom of the raft and turned it for a sight of her. The blackness of a Pacific night was upon the deep, yet I could see the outline of the sea chest, behind which she retreated for sleep when the shadows fell. The cook's bulk obscured its outline to my glance, for he was sprawled in front of it. The dawn could not be far away, unless the stars were lying, but the sea was rising and falling heavily like a sleeper in pain. A vague alarm for her seized me on a sudden, and I essayed to walk to where she was.

I could not get upon my feet. Upon my hands and knees I moved like a shadow. Had I the wealth of Ormuzd and of Ind I would have given all of it to be able to speak her name aloud. But what was her name? It dawned upon me for the first time since we kissed that I knew not her name nor anything about her. She was one of the passengers in the wrecked ship. So was I. Then she could not possibly know my full name, unless some purser or steward had revealed it. Well, I would question her regarding these things when I had reached her side.

Would I ever do so? Minute after minute I spent crawling to the chest. The starving men lay in slumber or in swoon, quite motionless. I wondered if the cook, too, could be asleep.

My head swam from the exertion of so much of my strength as was left after these long days without food or drink. I collapsed and lay motionless, until repose should have brought back some capacity to use my knees and hands.

I heard whispers. Her voice! Slowly I wrenched my neck about until my eyes were on a level with the top of the sea chest. There I clung, fearing the swoon.

"Darling!"

"Wait one day for the woman who loves you."

Then I heard the sound of a kiss.

Slowly and silently I dragged myself to the top of the sea chest. A strange fury had brought me strength. I peered down upon the girl.

She had one arm about the cook's neck. Her long hair swept his face. I could see by the light of the moon that his horrible paw rested upon her shoulder. I would have given this world for strength enough to clutch her by the throat.

"Wait one more day for me, beloved!" I heard her whisper. Then she stole around to the other side of the chest.

I was waiting for her. Resisting an impulse to drag her with me into that running sea—an impulse for which rage and hate would

have given me strength—I hissed:

"Wanton! I saw you kiss that Dutch fiend. I heard every word you spoke to him!"

The little blood left in me rushed to my brain and I fell beside the chest. She crawled to where I lay and put an arm about me.

I bit her.

"Leave me!" I managed to groan faintly. "Leave me!"

I could just make out the dawn at the other extremity of the horizon. I resolved that this day would bring my death.

"I had to do it," I heard her whisper, as she placed her lips to my ear. "That Dutchman would have killed one of you a week ago for food, but I made love to him to save our lives. I took his knife away while he had still strength left to use it and I threw it into the sea."

"You lie!" I managed to hiss out. "Griggs wanted to die that we might eat him."

"Yes, and I won him over to life with my kisses."

"Vile woman!"

I wanted to roar the words, but my voice scarcely attained the volume of a whisper. She had placed my head in her lap and I lay looking up helplessly into her face. Fury filled me and I tried to call for help.

"Jinks!" I moaned. "Jinks!"

"Jinks will do nothing for you," she whispered. "I have bought him too with my kisses. I have bribed every man on this raft to wait by telling him he alone has my love."

She relaxed her hold of my neck and leaned against the chest like a woman in a faint. I watched her closed eyes with the helpless fury of a starving man.

"Had I the strength," I muttered, "I would throw you into these waters. You have been the ruin of us all."

"I have saved you," she whispered. "Look!"

I followed her pointing finger with my eye, and upon the waters, lit up now by the dawn, I saw a sail.

STEPHEN CRANE
1870–1900

THE VETERAN

Out of the low window could be seen three hickory trees placed irregularly in a meadow that was resplendent in spring-time green. Farther away, the old, dismal belfry of the village church loomed over the pines. A horse, meditating in the shade of one of the hickories, lazily swished his tail. The warm sunshine made an oblong of vivid yellow on the floor of the grocery.

"Could you see the whites of their eyes?" said the man, who was seated on a soap box.

"Nothing of the kind," replied old Henry warmly. "Just a lot of flitting figures, and I let go at where they 'peared to be the thickest. Bang!"

"Mr. Fleming," said the grocer—his deferential voice expressed somehow the old man's exact social weight—"Mr. Fleming, you never was frightened much in them battles, was you?"

The vereran looked down and grinned. Observing his manner, the entire group tittered. "Well, I guess I was," he answered finally. "Pretty well scared, sometimes. Why, in my first battle I thought the sky was falling down. I thought the world was coming to an end. You bet I was scared."

Every one laughed. Perhaps it seemed strange and rather wonderful to them that a man should admit the thing, and in the tone of their laughter there was probably more admiration than if old Fleming had declared that he had always been a lion. Moreover, they knew that he had ranked as an orderly sergeant, and so their opinion of his heroism was fixed. None, to be sure, knew how an orderly sergeant ranked, but then it was understood to be somewhere just shy of a major-general's stars. So, when old Henry admitted that he had been frightened, there was a laugh.

"The trouble was," said the old man, "I thought they were all shooting at me. Yes, sir, I thought every man in the other army was aiming at me in particular, and only me. And it seemed so darned unreasonable, you know. I wanted to explain to 'em what an almighty good fellow I was, because I thought then they might quit all trying to hit me. But I couldn't explain, and they kept on being unreasonable—blim!—blam! bang! So I run!"

Two little triangles of wrinkles appeared at the corners of his

eyes. Evidently he appreciated some comedy in this recital. Down near his feet, however, little Jim, his grandson, was visibly horror-stricken. His hands were clasped nervously, and his eyes were wide with astonishment at this terrible scandal, his most magnificent grandfather telling such a thing.

"That was at Chancellorsville. Of course, afterward I got kind of used to it. A man does. Lots of men, though, seem to feel all right from the start. I did, as soon as I 'got on to it,' as they say now; but at first I was pretty well flustered. Now, there was young Jim Conklin, old Si Conklin's son—that used to keep the tannery—you none of you recollect him—well, he went into it from the start just as if he was born to it. But with me it was different. I had to get used to it."

When little Jim walked with his grandfather he was in the habit of skipping along on the stone pavement, in front of the three stores and the hotel of the town, and betting that he could avoid the cracks. But upon this day he walked soberly, with his hand gripping two of his grandfather's fingers. Sometimes he kicked abstractedly at dandelions that curved over the walk. Any one could see that he was much troubled.

"There's Sickles's colt over in the medder, Jimmie," said the old man. "Don't you wish you owned one like him?"

"Um," said the boy, with a strange lack of interest. He continued his reflections. Then finally he ventured: "Grandpa—now—was that true what you was telling those men?"

"What?" asked the grandfather. "What was I telling them?"

"Oh, about your running."

"Why yes, that was true enough, Jimmie. It was my first fight, and there was an awful lot of noise, you know."

Jimmie seemed dazed that this idol, of its own will, should so totter. His stout boyish idealism was injured.

Presently the grandfather said: "Sickles's colt is going for a drink. Don't you wish you owned Sickles's colt, Jimmie?"

The boy merely answered: "He ain't as nice as our'n." He lapsed then into another moody silence.

. . . . . .

One of the hired men, a Swede, desired to drive to the county seat for purposes of his own. The old man loaned a horse and an unwashed buggy. It appeared later that one of the purposes of the Swede was to get drunk.

After quelling some boisterous frolic of the farm hands and boys in the garret, the old man had that night gone peacefully to sleep, when he was aroused by clamouring at the kitchen door. He grabbed his trousers, and they waved out behind as he dashed forward. He could hear the voice of the Swede, screaming and blubbering. He pushed the wooden button, and, as the door flew open, the

Swede, a maniac, stumbled inward, chattering, weeping, still screaming: "De barn fire! Fire! Fire! De barn fire! Fire! Fire! Fire!"

There was a swift and indescribable change in the old man. His face ceased instantly to be a face; it became a mask, a grey thing, with horror written about the mouth and eyes. He hoarsely shouted at the foot of the little rickety stairs, and immediately, it seemed, there came down an avalanche of men. No one knew that during this time the old lady had been standing in her night-clothes at the bedroom door yelling: "What's th' matter? What's th' matter? What's th' matter?"

When they dashed toward the barn it presented to their eyes its usual appearance, solemn, rather mystic in the black night. The Swede's lantern was overturned at a point some yards in front of the barn doors. It contained a wild little conflagration of its own, and even in their excitement some of those who ran felt a gentle secondary vibration of the thrifty part of their minds at sight of this overturned lantern. Under ordinary circumstances it would have been a calamity.

But the cattle in the barn were trampling, trampling, trampling, and above this noise could be heard a humming like the song of innumerable bees. The old man hurled aside the great doors, and a yellow flame leaped out at one corner and sped and wavered frantically up the old grey wall. It was glad, terrible, this single flame, like the wild banner of deadly and triumphant foes.

The motley crowd from the garret had come with all the pails of the farm. They flung themselves upon the well. It was a leisurely old machine, long dwelling in indolence. It was in the habit of giving out water with a sort of reluctance. The men stormed at it, cursed it; but it continued to allow the buckets to be filled only after the wheezy windlass had howled many protests at the mad-handed men.

With his opened knife in his hand old Fleming himself had gone headlong into the barn, where the stifling smoke swirled with the air currents, and where could be heard in its fulness the terrible chorus of the flames, laden with tones of hate and death, a hymn of wonderful ferocity.

He flung a blanket over an old mare's head, cut the halter close to the manger, led the mare to the door, and fairly kicked her out to safety. He returned with the same blanket, and rescued one of the work horses. He took five horses out, and then came out himself, with his clothes bravely on fire. He had no whiskers, and very little hair on his head. They soused five pailfuls of water on him. His eldest son made a clean miss with the sixth pailful, because the old man had turned and was running down the decline and around to the basement of the barn, where were the stanchions of the cows. Some one noticed at the time that he ran very lamely, as if one of the frenzied horses had smashed his hip.

The cows, with their heads held in the heavy stanchions, had thrown themselves, strangled themselves, tangled themselves—done everything which the ingenuity of their exuberant fear could suggest to them.

Here, as at the well, the same thing happened to every man save one. Their hands went mad. They became incapable of everything save the power to rush into dangerous situations.

The old man released the cow nearest the door, and she, blind drunk with terror, crashed into the Swede. The Swede had been running to and fro babbling. He carried an empty milk-pail, to which he clung with an unconscious, fierce enthusiasm. He shrieked like one lost as he went under the cow's hoofs, and the milk-pail, rolling across the floor, made a flash of silver in the gloom.

Old Fleming took a fork, beat off the cow, and dragged the paralysed Swede to the open air. When they had rescued all the cows save one, which had so fastened herself that she could not be moved an inch, they returned to the front of the barn, and stood sadly, breathing like men who had reached the final point of human effort.

Many people had come running. Some one had even gone to the church, and now, from the distance, rang the tocsin note of the old bell. There was a long flare of crimson on the sky, which made remote people speculate as to the whereabouts of the fire.

The long flames sang their drumming chorus in voices of the heaviest bass. The wind whirled clouds of smoke and cinders into the faces of the spectators. The form of the old barn was outlined in black amid these masses of orange-hued flames.

And then came this Swede again, crying as one who is the weapon of the sinister fates: "De colts! De colts! You have forgot de colts!"

Old Fleming staggered. It was true: they had forgotten the two colts in the box-stalls at the back of the barn. "Boys," he said, "I must try to get 'em out." They clamoured about him then, afraid for him, afraid of what they should see. Then they talked wildly each to each. "Why, it's sure death!" "He would never get out!" "Why it's suicide for a man to go in there!" Old Fleming stared absent-mindedly at the open doors. "The poor little things!" he said. He rushed into the barn.

When the roof fell in, a great funnel of smoke swarmed toward the sky, as if the old man's mighty spirit, released from its body—a little bottle—had swelled like the genie of fable. The smoke was tinted rose-hue from the flames, and perhaps the unutterable midnights of the universe will have no power to daunt the colour of this soul.

FREDERICK STUART GREENE

B. 1870

THE CAT OF THE CANE-BRAKE

"SALLY! O-oh, Sally! I'm a-goin' now." Jim Gantt pushed back the limp brim of his rusty felt hat and turned colourless eyes toward the cabin.

A young woman came from around the corner of the house. From each hand dangled a bunch of squawking chickens. She did not speak until she had reached the wagon.

"Now, Jim, you ain't a-goin' to let them fellers down in Andalushy git you inter no blind tiger, air you?" The question came in a hopeless drawl; hopeless, too, her look into the man's sallow face.

"I ain't tetched a drop in more'n three months, has I?" Jim's answer was in a sullen key.

"No, Jim, you bin doin' right well lately." She tossed the chickens into the wagon, thoughtless of the hurt to their tied and twisted legs. "They're worth two bits apiece. That comes to two dollars, Jim. Don't you take a nickel less'n that."

Jim gave a listless pull at the cotton rope that served as reins.

"Git up thar, mule!" he called, and the wagon creaked off on wobbling wheels down the hot, dusty road.

The woman looked scornfully at the man's humped-over back for a full minute, turned and walked to the house, a hard smile at her mouth.

Sally Gantt gave no heed to her drab surroundings as she crossed the short stretch from road to cabin. All her twenty-two years had been spent in this far end of Alabama, where one dreary, unkempt clearing in the pine-woods is as dismal as the next. Comparisons which might add their fuel to her smouldering discontent were spared her. Yet, unconsciously, this bare, grassless country, with its flat miles of monotonous pine forests, its flatter miles of rank cane-brake, served to distil a bitter gall, poisoning all her thoughts.

The double cabin of Jim Gantt, its two rooms separated by a "dog-trot"—an open porch cut through the centre of the structure—was counted a thing of luxury by his scattered neighbours. Gantt had built it four years before, when he took up the land as his

homestead, and Sally for his wife. The labour of building this cabin had apparently drained his stock of energy to the dregs. Beyond the necessary toil of planting a small patch of corn, a smaller one of sweet potatoes, and fishing in the sluggish waters of Pigeon Creek, he now did nothing. Sally tended the chickens, their one source of money, and gave intermittent attention to the half-dozen razor-back hogs, which, with the scrubby mule, comprises their toll of live-stock.

As the woman mounted the hewn log that answered as a step to the dog-trot, she stopped to listen. From the kitchen came a faint noise ; a sound of crunching. Sally went on silent feet to the door. On the table, littered with unwashed dishes, a cat was gnawing at a fish head—a gaunt beast, its lean flanks covered with wiry fur except where ragged scars left exposed the bare hide. Its strong jaws crushed through the thick skull-bone of the fish as if it were an empty bird's egg.

Sally sprang to the stove and seized a pine knot.

" Dog-gone your yaller hide ! " she screamed. " Git out of hyar ! "

The cat wheeled with a start and faced the woman, its evil eyes glittering.

" Git, you yaller devil ! " the woman screamed again.

The cat sprang sidewise to the floor. Sally sent the jagged piece of wood spinning through the air. It crashed against the far wall, missing the beast by an inch. The animal arched its huge body and held its ground.

" You varmint, I'll git you this time ! " Sally stooped for another piece of wood. The cat darted through the door ahead of the flying missile.

" I'll kill you yit ! " Sally shouted after it. " An' he kain't hinder me neither ! "

She sat down heavily and wiped the sweat from her forehead.

It was several minutes before the woman rose from the chair and crossed the dog-trot to the sleeping-room. Throwing her faded sun-bonnet into a corner, she loosened her hair and began to brush it.

Sally Gantt was neither pretty nor handsome. But in a country peopled solely by pine-woods crackers, her black hair and eyes, clear skin and white teeth, made her stand out. She was a woman, and young. To a man, also young, who for two years had seen no face unpainted with the sallow hue of chills and fever, no eyes except faded blue ones framed by white, straggling lashes, no sound teeth, and the unsound ones stained always by the snuff stick, she might easily appear alluring.

With feminine deftness Sally re-coiled her hair. She took from a wooden peg a blue calico dress, its printed pattern as yet unbleached by the fierce suns. It gave to her slender figure some touch of grace. From beneath the bed she drew a pair of heavy brogans ; a shoe fashioned, doubtless, to match the listless nature of the people who most use them, slipping on or off without hindrance from lace or

buckle. As a final touch, she fastened about her head a piece of blue ribbon, the band of cheap silk making the flash in her black eyes the brighter.

Sally left the house and started across the rubbish-littered yard. A short distance from the cabin she stopped to look about her.

"I'm dog-tired of it all," she said fiercely. "I hates the house. I hates the whole place, an' more'n all I hates Jim."

She turned, scowling, and walked between the rows of growing corn that reached to the edge of the clearing. Here began the pine-woods, the one saving touch nature has given to this land. Beneath the grateful shade she hastened her steps. The trees stood in endless disordered ranks, rising straight and bare of branch until high aloft their spreading tops caught the sunlight.

A quarter of a mile brought her to the lowland. She went down the slight decline and stepped within the cane-brake. Here gloom closed about her. The thickly growing cane reached to twice her height. Above the cane the cypress spread its branches, draped with the sad grey moss of the South. No sun's ray struggled through the rank foliage to lighten the sodden earth beneath. Sally picked her way slowly through the swamp, peering cautiously beyond each fallen log before venturing a further step. Crawfish scuttled backward from her path to slip down the mud chimneys of their homes. The black earth and decaying plants filled the hot, still air with noisome odours. Thousands of hidden insects sounded through the dank stretches their grating calls. Slimy water oozed from beneath the heavy soles of her brogans, green and purple bubbles were left in each footprint, bubbles with iridescent oily skins.

As she went around a sharp turn she was caught up and lifted clear from the ground in the arms of a young man—a boy of twenty or thereabout.

"Oh, Bob, you scairt me—you certainly air rough!"

Without words he kissed her again and again.

"Now, Bob, you quit! Ain't you had enough?"

"Could I ever have enough? Oh, Sally, I love you so!" The words trembled from the boy.

"You certainly ain't like none of 'em 'round hyar, Bob." There was some pride in Sally's drawling voice. "I never seed none of the men folks act with gals like you does."

"There's no other girl like you to make them." Then, holding her from him, he went on fiercely: "You don't let any of them try it, do you?"

Sally smiled up into his glowing eyes.

"You knows I don't. They'd be afeard of Jim."

The blood rushed to the boy's cheeks, his arms dropped to his side; he stood sobered.

"Sally, we can't go on this way any longer. That's why I asked you to come to the river to-day."

"What's a-goin' to stop us?" A frightened look crossed the woman's face.

"I'm going away."

She made a quick step toward him.

"You ain't lost your job on the new railroad?"

"No. Come down to the boat where we can talk this over."

He helped her down the bank of the creek to a flat-bottomed skiff, and seated her in the stern with a touch of courtesy before taking the cross seat facing her.

"No, I haven't lost my job," he began earnestly, "but my section of the road is about finished. They'll move me to another residency farther up the line in about a week."

She sat silent a moment, her black eyes wide with question. He searched them for some sign of sorrow.

"What kin I do after you air gone?"

There was a hopeless note in her voice; it pleased the boy.

"That's the point: instead of letting them move me, I'm going to move myself." He paused that she might get the full meaning of his coming words.

"I'm going away from here to-night, and I'm going to take you with me."

"No, no! I dasn't!" She shrank before his steady gaze.

He moved swiftly across to her. Throwing his arms around her, he poured out his words.

"Yes! You will! You must! You love me, don't you?"

Sally nodded in helpless assent.

"Better than anything in this world?"

Again Sally nodded.

"Then listen. To-night at twelve you come to the river. I'll be waiting for you at the edge of the swamp. We'll row down to Brewton. We can easily catch the six-twenty to Mobile, and, once there, we'll begin to live," he finished grandly.

"But I can't! Air you crazy? How kin I git away an' Jim right in the house?"

"I've thought of all that; you just let him see this." He drew a bottle from beneath the seat. "You know what he'll do to this; it's the strongest corn whisky I could find."

"Oh, Bob! I'm a-scairt to."

"Don't you love me?" His young eyes looked reproach.

Sally threw both arms about the boy's neck and drew his head down to her lips. Then she pushed him from her.

"Bob, is it so what the men-folks all say, that the railroad gives you a hundred dollars every month?"

He laughed. "Yes, you dear girl, and more. I get a hundred and a quarter, and I've been getting it for two years in this God-forsaken country, and nothing to spend it on. I've got over a thousand dollars saved up."

The woman's eyes widened. She kissed the boy on the mouth.

"They 'lows as how you're the smartest engineer on the road."

The boy's head was held high.

Sally made some mental calculations before she spoke again.

"Oh, Bob, I jes' cain't. I'm a-scairt to."

He caught her to him. A man of longer experience might have noted the sham in her reluctance.

"My darling, what are you afraid of?" he cried.

"What air we a-goin' to do after we gits to Mobile?"

"Oh, I've thought of everything. They're building a new line down in Texas. We'll go there. I'll get another job as resident engineer. I have my profession," he ended proudly.

"You might git tired, and want to git shed of me Bob."

He smothered her words under fierce kisses. His young heart beat at bursting pressure. In bright colours he pictured the glory of Mobile, New Orleans, and all the world that lay before them to love each other in.

When Sally left the boat she had promised to come. Where the pine-trees meet the cane-brake he would be waiting for her, at midnight.

At the top of the bank she turned to wave.

"Wait! Wait! called the boy. He rushed up the slope.

"Quit, Bob, you're hurtin' me." She tore herself from his arms and hastened back along the slimy path. When she reached the pine-wood she paused.

"More'n a thousand dollars!" she murmured, and a slow, satisfied smile crossed her shrewd face.

The sun, now directly over the tops of the trees, shot its scorching rays through the foliage. They struck the earth in vertical shafts, heating it to the burning point. Not a breath stirred the glistening pine-needles on the towering branches. It was one of those noon-times which, in the moisture-charged air of southern Alabama, makes life a steaming hell to all living things save reptiles and lovers.

Reaching the cabin, Sally went first to the kitchen room. She opened a cupboard and, taking the cork from the bottle, placed the whisky on the top shelf and closed the wooden door.

She crossed the dog-trot to the sleeping-room; a spitting snarl greeted her entrance. In the centre of the bed crouched the yellow cat, its eyes gleaming, every muscle over its bony frame drawn taut, ready for the spring. The woman, startled, drew back. The cat moved on stiff legs nearer. Unflinchingly they glared into each other's eyes.

"Git out of hyar afore I kill yer! You yaller devil!" Sally's voice rang hard as steel.

The cat stood poised at the edge of the bed, its glistening teeth showing in its wide mouth. Without an instant's shift of her defiant stare, Sally wrenched a shoe from her foot. The animal with spread

claws sprang straight for the woman's throat. The cat and the heavy brogan crashed together in mid-air. Together they fell to the floor; the cat landed lightly, silently, and bounded through the open door.

Sally fell back against the log wall of the cabin, feeling the skin at her throat with trembling fingers. . . .

"Jim! Oh-h, Jim!" Sally called from the cabin. "Come on in, yer supper's ready."

"He ain't took nothin' to drink to-day," she thought. "It's nigh three months now, he'll be 'most crazy."

The man took a few sticks of wood from the ground, and came on dragging feet through the gloom. As Sally watched his listless approach she felt in full force the oppressive melancholy of her dismal surroundings. Awakened by the boy's enthusiastic plans, imagination stirred within her. In the distance a girdled pine stood clear-cut against the horizon. Its bark peeled and fallen left the dead, naked trunk the colour of dried bones. Near the stunted top one bare limb stretched out. Unnoticed a thousand times before, to the woman it looked to-night a ghostly gibbet against the black sky.

Sally shuddered and went into the lighted kitchen.

"I jes' kilt a rattler down by the wood-pile." Jim threw down his load and drew a splint-bottomed chair to the table.

"Ground-rattler, Jim?"

"Naw, sir-ee! A hell-bendin' big diamond-back."

"Did you hurt the skin?" Sally asked quickly.

"Naw. I chopped his neck clean, short to the haid. An' I done it so durn quick his fangs is a-stickin' out yit, I reckon."

"Did he strike at you?"

"Yes, sir-ee, an' the pizen came out of his mouth jes' like a fog."

"Ah, you're foolin' me!"

"No, I ain't neither. I've heard tell of it, bit I never seed it afore. The ground was kinda black whar he lit, an' jes' as I brought the axe down on him, thar I seed a little puff like, same as white steam, in front of his mouth."

"How big was he, Jim?"

"'Leven rattle an' a button."

"Did you skin him?"

"Naw, it was too durn dark, but I hung him high up, so's the hawgs won't git at him. His skin 'll fotch fo' bits down at Andalushy."

"Ax 'em six, Jim, them big ones gittin' kinda skeerce."

Jim finished his supper in silence; the killing of the snake had provided more conversation than was usual during three meals among pine-woods people.

As Sally was clearing away the dishes, the yellow cat came through

the door. Slinking close to the wall, it avoided the woman, and sprang upon the knees of its master. Jim grinned into the eyes of the beast and began stroking its coarse hair. The cat set up a grating purr.

Sally looked at the two for a moment in silence.

" Jim, you gotta kill that cat."

Jim's grin widened, showing his tobacco-stained teeth.

" Jim, I'm a-tellin' you, you gotta kill that cat."

" An' I'm a-tellin' you I won't."

" Jim, it sprung at me to-day, an' would have hurt me somethin' turrible if I hadn't hit it over the haid with my shoe."

" Well, you must 'a' done somethin' to make him. You leave him alone an' he won't pester you."

The woman hesitated ; she looked at the man as yet undecided ; after a moment she spoke again.

" Jim Gantt, I'm axin' you for the las' time, which does you think more'n of, me or that snarlin' varmint ? "

" He don't snarl at me so much as you does," the man answered doggedly. " Anyway, I ain't a-goin' to kill him ; an' you gotta leave him alone, too. You jes' min yer own business an' go tote the mattress out on the trot. It's too durn hot to sleep in the house."

The woman passed behind him to the cupboard, reached up, opened wide the wooden door, and went out of the room.

Jim stroked the cat, its grating purr growing louder in the stillness.

A minute passed.

Into the dull eyes of the man a glitter came, and grew. Slowly he lifted his head. Farther and farther his chin drew up until the cords beneath the red skin of his neck stood out in ridges. The nostrils of his bony nose quivered, he sniffed the hot air like a dog straining to catch a distant scent. His tongue protruded and moved from side to side across his lips.

Standing in the darkness without, the woman smiled grimly.

Abruptly the man rose. The forgotten cat fell, twisted in the air, and lighted on its feet. Jim wheeled and strode to the cupboard. As his hand closed about the bottle, the gleam in his eyes became burning flames. He jerked the bottle from the shelf, threw his head far back. The fiery liquor ran down his throat. He returned to his seat ; the cat rubbed its ribbed flank against his leg, he stooped and lifted it to the table. Waving the bottle in front of the yellow beast he laughed :

" Here's to yer—an' to'ad yer ! " and swallowed half a tumblerful of the colourless liquid.

Sally dragged the shuck mattress to the dog-trot. Fully dressed, she lay waiting for midnight.

An hour went by before Jim shivered the empty bottle against the log wall of the kitchen. Pressing both hands hard upon the

table, he heaved himself to his feet, upsetting the candle in the effort. He leered at the flame and slapped his bare palm down on it. The hot, melted wax oozed up, unheeded, between his fingers. Clinging to the table top, he turned himself toward the open door, steadied his swaying body for an instant, then lurched forward. His shoulder crashed against the door-post, his body spun half-way round. The man fell flat upon his back, missing the mattress by a yard. The back of his head struck hard on the rough boards of the porch floor. He lay motionless, his feet sticking straight up on the door-sill.

The yellow cat sprang lightly over the fallen body and went out into the night. . . .

Wide-eyed, the woman lay, watching. After moments of tense listening the sound of faint breathing came to her from the prone figure. Sally frowned. " He's too no 'count to git kilt," she said aloud, and turned on her side. She judged, from the stars, it was not yet eleven. Drowsiness came ; she fell into uneasy slumber.

Out in the night the yellow cat was prowling. It stopped near the wood-pine. With extended paw, it touched lightly something that lay on the ground. Its long teeth fastened upon it. The cat slunk off toward the house. Without sound it sprang to the floor of the dog-trot. Stealthily, its body crouched low, it started to cross through the open way. As it passed the woman she muttered and struck out in her sleep. The cat flattened to the floor. Near the moving arm, the thing it carried fell from its teeth. The beast scurried out across the opening.

The night marched on to the sound of a million voices calling shrilly through the gloom.

The woman awoke. The stars glowed pale from a cloudy midnight sky. She reached out her right hand, palm down, to raise herself from the bed, throwing her full weight upon it. Two needle points pierced her wrist. A smothered cry was wrung from her lips. She reached with her left hand to pluck at the hurt place. It touched something cold, something hard and clammy, some dead thing. She jerked back the hand. A scream shivered through the still air. Pains becoming instantly acute, unbearable, darted through her arm. Again she tried to pull away the torturing needle points. Her quivering hand groped aimlessly in the darkness. She could not force herself, a second time, to touch the dead, clinging thing at her wrist. Screaming, she dragged herself to the man.

" Jim, I'm hurt, help me ! Help me ! "

The man did not move.

" Jim, wake up ! Help me ! " she wailed uselessly to the inert man.

The terrifying pain spurted from wrist to shoulder. With her clenched left hand she beat against the man's upturned face.

" You drunken fool, help me ! Take this thing away ! "

The man lay torpid beneath her pounding fist. . . .

Along the path to Pigeon Creek, where the pine-woods run into the crane-brake, a boy waited ; waited until the eastern sky grew from black to grey. Then with cautious tread he began to move, his face turned toward the cabin. As he neared the clearing the grey in the east changed to red. He left the woods and entered the field of corn. His footfalls made no sound on the earth between the furrows.

At the cabin he drew close against the wall and listened. A man's heavy breathing reached his straining ears. Slowly he moved toward the opening in the middle of the house. Above the breathing he heard a grating noise ; between the deep-drawn breaths and the grating, another sound came to him ; a harsh, rhythmic scratching.

The edge of the sun rose abruptly above the flat earth, sending light within the opening.

The boy thrust his head around the angle. A yellow cat was sitting at the foot of the mattress. From its throat grating purrs came in regular measure ; between each purr the beast's spread claws clutched and released the stiff ticking.

Beyond lay the man.

Between the cat and the man, stretched across the shuck bed, was the woman ; her glassy eyes staring up into the grinning face of the cat. From her shoulder, reaching out toward the boy, was a livid, turgid thing ; a hand and arm, puffed beyond all human shape. From the swollen wrist, its poisoned fangs sunk deep into an artery, hung the mangled head of a snake.

The swaying corn blades whipped against the boy's white face as he fled between the rows.

SAMUEL HOPKINS ADAMS

B. 1871

SUCH AS WALK IN DARKNESS

In all the trade of the city you might not find such another quaint business firm as Solomon John and Billy Wigg. The senior partner was a gentle old giant; the junior a brisk and shaggy little dog. It was Solomon John's business to stand on a roaring corner and sell papers; it was Billy Wigg's business to take care of him while he did it, for he was blind. It was our business—Dr. Harvey's and mine—to pay for our papers and pass on, but we seldom strictly minded it. Instead, we would stop to talk to Solomon John to the detriment of trade, and to be patronised by Billy Wigg, who was much puffed up with self-importance, conceiving himself to be principal owner of the earth and sole proprietor of Solomon John. In the half of which he was correct.

I was very fond of Billy Wigg, despite his airs of superiority. Harvey preferred old Solomon; but this was a semi-professional interest, for my medical friend had contracted the pamphlet habit, which he indulged before scientific bodies made up of gentlemen with weak eyes who knew more about ophthalmology than can be found in many fat tomes. Solomon John was a remarkable case of something quite unpronounceable, and Harvey used to gaze into his eyes with rapt intensity, while Billy Wigg fidgeted and struggled against the temptation to gnaw such portions of him as were within reach; for Billy Wigg didn't understand, and what he didn't understand he disapproved of on principle. In the light of subsequent events I believe Billy's uneasiness to have been an instance of animal prevision.

To see Billy Wigg conduct his master across that mill-race of traffic that swirled between curb and curb, as he did every morning in time for business, was an artistic pleasure. Something more than a mere pilot was the dog; rather the rudder to whose accurate direction old Solomon responded with precise and prompt fidelity. A tug of the trouser leg from behind would bring the ancient newsboy to a halt. A gentle jerk forward would start him again, and in obedience to a steady pull to one side or the other he would trustingly suffer himself to be conducted around a checked wagon or a halted cable car. All the time Billy Wigg would keep up a running conversation made up of admonition, warning, and encouragement.

"Come on, now"—in a series of sharp yaps as they started from the curb. "Push right ahead. Hold hard. That's all right; it's by. Hurry now. Hurry, I said. *Will* you do as I tell you?" Then, to a too pressing cabby, in an angry bark, "What's the matter with you, anyway? Trying to run folks down? Hey? Well"—apologetically, in response to a jerk on his string—"these fool drivers do stir me up. Wait a bit. Now for it. And here we are."

How many thousand times dog and man had made the trip in safety before the dire day of the accident not even Solomon John can reckon. Harvey and I had started down town early, while our pair of paper-vending friends chanced to be a little late. As we reached the corner they were already half-way across the street, and Billy Wigg, with all the strength of terror, was striving to haul Solomon John backward.

"What's the matter with Billy?" said Harvey, for from the sidewalk we could not then see the cause of his excitement.

A second later the question was answered, as there plunged into view from behind a car the galloping horse of a derelict delivery wagon.

"Good heavens! Look at the old man," I cried, and in the same breath, "Look at the dog," gasped Harvey.

With one mighty jerk Billy Wigg had torn the leash from his master's hand. Bereft of his sole guidance in the thunder and rush of traffic, the blind man stretched out piteous hands, warding the death he could not see. "Billy," he quavered, "where are you, Billy? Come back to me, Billy-dog."

For once Billy Wigg was deaf to his master's voice. He was obeying a more imperious call, that unfathomed nobility of dog-nature that responds so swiftly to the summons. He was casting his own life in the balance to save another's. Straight at the horse's throat he launched himself, a forlorn hope. It was a very big horse, and Billy was a very little dog. The up-stroke of the knee caught him full; he was flung, whirling, fell almost under the wheels of a cab, rolled into the gutter, and lay there quiet. The horse had swerved a little, not quite enough. There was a scream, and the blind man went down from the glancing impact of the shoulder. Harvey and I were beside him almost as soon as the cross-walk policeman. The three of us carried him to the side-walk.

"No need to call an ambulance, officer," said Harvey. "I'm a physician and the man is a friend of mine."

"Bedad, thin, the dawg is a friend of mine," said the big fellow. "Couldn't ye take him along too, sir?"

"Well—rather," said Harvey heartily. "Where is he?" He turned to look for the dog.

Billy Wigg came crawling toward us. Never tell me that dogs have no souls. The eyes in Billy's shaggy little face yearned with a more than human passion of anxiety and love, as, gasping with pain—for he had been cruelly shaken—he dragged himself to his

partner's face. At the touch of the warm, eager tongue, Solomon John's eyes opened. He stretched out his hand and buried it in the heavy fur.

"Hello, Billy," he said weakly. "I was afraid you were hurt. Are you all right, old boy?" And Billy, burrowing a wet nose in Solomon John's neck, wept for joy with loud whines.

Some rapid and expert wire-pulling on the part of Harvey landed our pair of friends in a private hospital, where Solomon John proved a most grateful and gentle patient, and Billy Wigg a most tumultuous one until arrangement was made for the firm to occupy one and the same cot. Then he became tractable, even enduring the indignity of a flannel jacket and splints with a sort of humorous tolerance. Every day Harvey came and gazed soulfully into Solomon John's glazed eyes—which is a curious form of treatment for broken collar-bone, not sanctioned by any of the authorities who have written on the subject. It soon became evident that Harvey didn't care anything about the rib; he had other designs. On a day he came to the point.

"Solomon John, would you like to have your sight back?"

The blind man sat up in his cot and pressed his hands to his head.

"Do you mean it, sir?" he gasped. "You—you wouldn't go to fool an old man about such a thing?"

"Will you let me operate on you to-morrow?"

"Anything you think best, sir. I don't quite seem to take it all in yet, sir—not the whole sense of it. But if it does come out right," added Solomon John in the simplicity of his soul, "won't Billy Wigg be surprised and tickled!"

Billy Wigg raged mightily and rent the garments of his best friends, because he was shut out during the operation. When he was admitted after it was over he howled tumultuously, because Solomon John was racked with ether sickness, which he mistook for the throes of approaching dissolution. Followed then weeks during which Solomon John wore a white bandage, in place of the old green eye-shade, and at frequent intervals sang a solemn but joyous chant which Billy Wigg accompanied with impatient yelps, because he couldn't make out what it meant:

We're going to have our sight again,
Billy Wigg, Billy Wigg:
We're going to see the world again,
Billy, my dog.

It was a long, nerve-trying wait, but the day finally came when the white bandages were removed. After the first gasp of rapture, Solomon John looked about him eagerly.

"Let me see my dog," he said. "Billy, is this you?" as the junior partner looked with anxious and puzzled eyes into his face. "Well, you're certainly a mighty handsome doggy, old boy." (Billy Wigg was homelier than a stack of hay in January, but the eyes that looked on him were as those of a mother when she sees her first babe).

Unhappiness was the portion of Billy in the days that followed. A partner who wandered about unchaperoned and eluded obstacles without relying on his sense of touch was quite beyond his comprehension. So he sulked consistently until the time came for leaving the hospital. Then he chirked up a bit, thinking, presumably, that Solomon John would resume his old habit of blind reliance upon him when once the doors had closed behind them. Poor Billy!

It was three weeks after the operation that they left, Solomon John being discharged as cured. Harvey exulted. He said it was a great operation and proved things. I thought, myself, it was a mean trick on Billy Wigg. My unprofessional diagnosis was that he was on the road to becoming a chronic melancholiac.

The partners called on Harvey soon after the departure from the hospital. They were a study in psychological antithesis; Solomon John bubbling over with boyish happiness, Billy Wigg aged with the weight of woe he was carrying. The old man was touchingly grateful, but his ally surreptitiously essayed to bite a piece out of Harvey's leg when his back was turned. He nursed an unavenged wrong.

Months passed before we saw the pair again. We returned from our European vacation confident of finding them on the same old corner, and sure enough, they were there. But as we approached Harvey seized me by the arm.

"Good heaven's! Bob! Look at the old man!"

"What's wrong with him?" said I. "He looks just the same as he used to."

"Just the same as he used to," echoed Harvey bitterly. "Eyeshade and all. All my work gone for nothing. Poor old boy!"

"Billy Wigg's all right, anyway," said I, as that superior animal greeted us with every indication of excitement.

"Think so?" said Harvey. "It strikes me that it isn't exactly welcome that he's trying to express." Then, in a louder voice to Solomon John, "How did it happen, old Sol?"

At the sound of his voice Solomon John whirled about and started to thrust up his shade, as if involuntarily. Then he held out tremulous hands, crying; "What! Is that you, Dr. Harvey? God bless you, sir! And is Mr. Roberts with you? Well, well, but this does me good. You're a sight for sore eyes!"

"Not for yours, Solomon John."

"And why not, then? Whist! I forgot," he broke off scaredly, jerking his head toward Billy Wigg, who held us all under jealous scrutiny. "Wait a breath." Thrusting his hand into his pocket, he whipped it out suddenly. A flight of coins scattered and twinkled and rolled diversely on the side-walk. "Dear, dear!" cried the old man cunningly. "The old fool that I am! I'll never be rich this way. Pick them up, Billy-boy."

Billy hated it, for picking small coins from a smooth pavement with lip and tooth is no easy job; hated worse leaving his partner

to two such unscrupulous characters as he well knew us to be. But he knew his business, and set about it with all his energies.

"Whisper now," said the senior partner as Billy swore under his breath at a slithery and elusive dime. "I've as fine a pair of eyes as you'd want for star-gazing at noonday."

"Then what on earth——"

"Sh-h-h! Soft and easy! The beast's cocking his little ear this way. Sure 'twas all on his account, sirs."

"On Billy's account?" we both exclaimed in a breath.

"You didn't think I'd be faking it?" he asked reproachfully.

We didn't; and we said so. But we required further enlightenment.

"All on account of Billy Wigg there, sirs. The eyesight was a million blessings to me, but 'twas death to poor Billy. Not a pleasure in life would he take after we left the hospital. When I'd walk free and easy along the streets that looked so pretty to my old eyes, the dog'd be crazy with fear that some harm would come to me through him not leading me. At the last he just laid down and set out to die. He'd not sleep, he'd not eat; and the eyes of him when he'd look at me were fit to make a man weep. I sent for a dog doctor—you being away, sir," put in Solomon John in polite parenthesis to my friend. "He says, 'The dog's dying of a broken heart. I've seen it before,' he says. 'What'll I do?' says I. 'He'll not be content till you are, as you were before,' says the dog doctor. It was a minute before I sensed what he meant. Then my heart got thick and sick inside me. 'Blind?' I says. 'Is that what you mean?' 'You old fool,' says the dog doctor, 'can't you do a bit of play-acting? You've had enough practice in the part,' he says.

"Over I went and got my stick and put on the old shade that I hadn't ever thought to use again, thanks to you sir, and tap-tapped across the floor to Billy Wigg. 'Come on, Billy,' says I; 'I want you to take me out for a walk.' Billy jumped up with a kind of choky bark, and I hugged Billy and Billy hugged me, and—we've been doing business on the corner ever since."

There was a long pause. Harvey's expression was queer. I felt a little queer myself. It was a queer story, you know. Finally I asked the old man if business was good. Not that I particularly yearned to know, but it seemed to be time to say something.

"Nicely, sir, thank you," said Solomon John; "but I want to ask you, Is it a dishonesty, think you, for me to be wearing my shade like a blind man, and me able to see a flea on the end of Billy Wigg's tail the length of the block away? The Lord's been mighty good to me, sir—you and the Lord—giving me back my sight," said Solomon John simply, turning to Harvey, "and I wouldn't want to do anything that wasn't just square."

"I wouldn't let it weigh on my mind," said Harvey.

"I'd been thinking of a bit of a sign," proceeded Solomon John. 'A friend printed it out for me, but the idea's my own."

After some fumbling under his coat he produced a placard artfully designed in large and flourishy letters. This was the order of it:

I Am NOT Blind
but
The Dog
Thinks I Am.

Billy Wigg seemed pleased because Harvey kicked me. No doubt he would have been equally pleased if I had kicked Harvey. But it happened to be I who laughed. Harvey covered it up by soberly telling Solomon John that the sign was sure to be a grand success.

It was a grand success; quite stupendous, in fact. Old Sol did a business on the strength of it that would have made his eyes pop out if he hadn't kept them tight shut out of respect to Billy's prejudices. Reporters found his simplicity and naïve honesty a mine of "good stuff," and the picture of the firm was in all the papers. Billy Wigg began to suffer from swelled head; became haughty, not to say snobbish. But the fierce light of publicity wore upon the simple soul of Solomon John. He discarded the extraordinary placard, and was glad when he faded away from fame. Billy wasn't. He liked notoriety as well as authority.

Billy continued to exercise his authority. Perhaps tyranny would be nearer the mark. But even so meek a soul as that of Solomon John has limits of endurance beyond which it is not well to press. Only the other day it was that the old man said to Harvey, while Billy Wigg was otherwise engaged:

"It's as bad as being a henpecked husband, sir. Last night, as I was quietly stepping out the window to take a mug of ale with some friends, Billy wakes up, and the fuss he makes rouses the neighbourhood. Sure, he wouldn't hark to my going at all. You can see his teeth-marks on my shin this minute, sir. Could you give me something harmless to put in his food that'd make him sleep the sounder?"

Harvey said he'd think about it. He wasn't obliged to. Less than a week later he got a note in the mail:

"Dear Sir—I could not stand it any longer. I have Absconded to Buffalo to Take a Rest. Please be Good to Billy Wigg. I inclose his Board and Lodging any place you Put him. He is a good Dog, but too Bossy. I am Going to See Things till my Eyes get Tired. I will come Back in Future.—Yrs respectfully,

"Solomon J. Boles.

"*P.S.*—I know you will Treat Billy Good."

The enclosure was a twenty-dollar bill. It was the price of freedom, and cheap at the price.

JACK LONDON
1876–1916

THE SICKNESS OF LONE CHIEF

This is a tale that was told to me by two old men. We sat in the smoke of a mosquito-smudge, in the cool of the day, which was midnight; and ever and anon, throughout the telling, we smote lustily and with purpose at such of the winged pests as braved the smoke for a snack at our hides. To the right, beneath us, twenty feet down the crumbling bank, the Yukon gurgled lazily. To the left, on the rose-leaf rim of the low-lying hills, smouldered the sleepy sun, which saw no sleep that night nor was destined to see sleep for many nights to come.

The old men who sat with me and valorously slew mosquitoes were Lone Chief and Mutsak, erstwhile comrades in arms, and now withered repositories of tradition and ancient happening. They were the last of their generation and without honour among the younger set which had grown up on the farthest fringe of a mining civilisation. Who cared for tradition in these days, when spirits could be evoked from black bottles, and black bottles could be evoked from the complaisant white men for a few hours' sweat or a mangy fur? Of what potency the fearful rites and masked mysteries of shamanism, when daily that living wonder the steamboat coughed and spluttered up and down the Yukon, in defiance of all law a veritable fire-breathing monster? And of what value was hereditary prestige, when he who now chopped the most wood, or best conned a stern-wheeler through the island mazes, attained the chiefest consideration of his fellows?

Of a truth, having lived too long, they had fallen on evil days, these two old men, Lone Chief and Mutsak, and in the new order they were without honour or place. So they waited drearily for death, and the while their hearts warmed to the strange white man who shared with them the torments of the mosquito-smudge and lent ready ear to their tales of old time before the steamboat came.

"So a girl was chosen for me," Lone Chief was saying. His voice, shrill and piping, ever and again dropped plummet-like into a hoarse and rattling bass, and, just as one became accustomed to it, soaring upward into the thin treble—alternate cricket chirpings and bull-frog croakings, as it were.

"So a girl was chosen for me," he was saying. "For my father, who was Kask-ta-ka, the Otter, was angered because I looked not with a needful eye upon women. He was an old man, and chief of his tribe. I was the last of his sons to be alive, and through me, only, could he look to see his blood go down among those to come after and as yet unborn. But know, O White Man, that I was very sick; and when neither the hunting nor the fishing delighted me, and by meat my belly was not made warm, how should I look with favour upon women? or prepare for the feast of marriage? or look forward to the prattle and troubles of little children?"

"Ay," Mutsak interrupted. "For had not Lone Chief fought in the arms of a great bear till his head was cracked and blood ran from out his ears?"

Lone Chief nodded vigorously. "Mutsak speaks true. In the time that followed, my head was well, and it was not well. For though the flesh healed and the sore went away, yet was I sick inside. When I walked, my legs shook under me, and when I looked at the light, my eyes became filled with tears. And when I opened my eyes, the world outside went around and around, and when I closed my eyes, my head inside went around and around, and all the things I have ever seen went around and around inside my head. And above my eyes there was a great pain, as though something heavy rested always upon them, or like a band that is drawn tight and gives much hurt. And speech was slow to me, and I waited long for each right word to come to my tongue. And when I waited not long, all manner of words crowded in, and my tongue spoke foolishness. I was very sick, and when my father, the Otter, brought the girl Kasaan before me——"

"Who was a young girl, and strong, my sister's child," Mutsak broke in. "Strong-hipped for children was Kasaan, and straight-legged and quick of foot. She made better moccasins than any of all the young girls, and the bark-rope she braided was the stoutest. And she had a smile in her eyes, and a laugh on her lips; and her temper was not hasty, nor was she unmindful that men give the law and women ever obey."

"As I say, I was very sick," Lone Chief went on. "And when my father, the Otter, brought the girl Kasaan before me, I said rather should they make me ready for burial than for marriage. Whereat the face of my father went black with anger, and he said that I should be served according to my wish, and that I who was yet alive should be made ready for death as one already dead——"

"Which be not the way of our people, O White Man," spoke up Mutsak. "For know that these things that were done to Lone Chief it was our custom to do only to dead men. But the Otter was very angry."

"Ay," said Lone Chief. "My father, the Otter, was a man short of speech and swift of deed. And he commanded the people to gather before the lodge wherein I lay. And when they were gathered,

he commanded them to mourn for his son who was dead——"

"And before the lodge they sang the death-song—*O-o-o-o-o-o-o-a-haa-ha-a-ich-klu-kuk-ich-klu-kuk,*" wailed Mutsak, in so excellent an imitation that all the tendrils of my spine crawled and curved in sympathy.

"And inside the lodge," continued Lone Chief, "my mother blackened her face with soot, and flung ashes upon her head, and mourned for me as one alrcady dead; for so had my father commanded. So Okiakuta, my mother, mourned with much noise, and beat her breasts and tore her hair; and likewise Hooniak, my sister, and Seenatah, my mother's sister; and the noise they made caused a great ache in my head, and I felt that I would surely and immediately die.

"And the elders of the tribe gathered about me where I lay and discussed the journey my soul must take. One spoke of the thick and endless forests where lost souls wandered crying, and where I, too, might chance to wander and never see the end. And another spoke of the big rivers, rapid with bad water, where evil spirits shrieked and lifted up their formless arms to drag one down by the hair. For these rivers, all said together, a canoe must be provided me. And yet another spoke of the storms, such as no live man ever saw, when the stars rained down out of the sky, and the earth gaped wide in many cracks, and all the rivers in the heart of the earth rushed out and in. Whereupon they that sat by me flung up their arms and wailed loudly; and those outside heard, and wailed more loudly. And as to them I was as dead, so was I to my own mind dead. I did not know when, or how, yet did I know that I had surely died.

"And Okiakuta, my mother, laid beside me my squirrel-skin parka. Also she laid beside me my parka of caribou hide, and my raincoat of seal-gut, and my wet-weather muclucs, that my soul should be warm and dry on its long journey. Further, there was mention made of a steep hill, thick with briers and devil's-club, and she fetched heavy moccasins to make the way easy for my feet.

"And when the elders spoke of the great beasts I should have to slay, the young men laid beside me my strongest bow and straightest arrows, my throwing-stick, my spear and knife. And when the elders spoke of the darkness and silence of the great spaces my soul must wander through, my mother wailed yet more loudly and flung yet more ashes upon her head.

"And the girl, Kasaan, crept in, very timid and quiet, and dropped a little bag upon the things for my journey. And in the little bag, I knew, were the flint and steel and the well-dried tinder for the fires my soul must build. And the blankets were chosen which were to be wrapped around me. Also were the slaves selected that were to be killed that my soul might have company. There were seven of these slaves, for my father was rich and powerful, and it was fit that I, his son, should have proper burial. These

slaves we had got in war from the Mukumuks, who live down the Yukon. On the morrow, Skolka, the shaman, would kill them, one by one, so that their souls should go questing with mine through the Unknown. Among other things, they would carry my canoe till we came to the big river, rapid with bad water. And there being no room, and their work being done, they would come no farther, but remain and howl for ever in the dark and endless forest.

" And as I looked on my fine warm clothes, and my blankets and weapons of war, and as I thought of the seven slaves to be slain, I felt proud of my burial and knew that I must be the envy of many men. And all the while my father, the Otter, sat silent and black. And all that day and night the people sang my death-song and beat the drums, till it seemed that I had surely died a thousand times.

" But in the morning my father arose and made talk. He had been a fighting man all his days, he said, as the people knew. Also the people knew that it were a greater honour to die fighting in battle than on the soft skins by the fire. And since I was to die anyway, it were well that I should go against the Mukumuks and be slain. Thus would I attain honour and chieftainship in the final abode of the dead, and thus would honour remain to my father who was the Otter. Wherefore he gave command that a war party be made ready to go down the river. And that when we came upon the Mukumuks I was to go forth alone from my party, giving semblance of battle, and so be slain."

" Nay, but hear, O White Man ! " cried Mutsak, unable longer to contain himself. " Skolka, the shaman, whispered long that night in the ear of the Otter, and it was his doing that Lone Chief should be sent forth to die. For the Otter being old, and Lone Chief the last of his sons, Skolka had it in mind to become chief himself over the people. And when the people had made great noise for a day and a night and Lone Chief was yet alive, Skolka was become afraid that he would not die. So it was the counsel of Skolka, with fine words of honour and deeds, that spoke through the mouth of the Otter."

" Ay," replied Lone Chief. " Well did I know it was the doing of Skolka, but I was unmindful, being very sick. I had no heart for anger, nor belly for stout words, and I cared little, one way or the other, only I cared to die and have done with it all. So, O White Man, the war party was made ready. No tried fighters were there, nor elders, crafty and wise—naught but five score of young men who had seen little fighting. And all the village gathered together above the bank of the river to see us depart. And we departed amid great rejoicing and the singing of my praises. Even thou, O White Man, wouldst rejoice at sight of a young man going forth to battle, even though doomed to die.

" So we went forth, the five score young men, and Mutsak came also, for he was likewise young and untried. And by command of my father, the Otter, my canoe was lashed on either side to the

canoe of Mutsak and the canoe of Kannakut. Thus was my strength saved me from the work of the paddles, so that, for all of my sickness, I might make a brave show at the end. And thus we went down the river.

"Nor will I weary thee with the tale of the journey, which was not long. And not far above the village of the Mukumuks we came upon two of their fighting men in canoes, that fled at the sight of us. And then, according to the command of my father, my canoe was cast loose and I was left to drift down all alone. Also, according to his command, were the young men to see me die, so that they might return and tell the manner of my death. Upon this, my father, the Otter, and Skolka, the shaman, had been very clear, with stern promises of punishment in case they were not obeyed.

"I dipped my paddle and shouted words of scorn after the fleeing warriors. And the vile things I shouted made them turn their heads in anger, when they beheld that the young men held back, and that I came on alone. Whereupon, when they had made a safe distance, the two warriors drew their canoes somewhat apart and waited side by side for me to come between. And I came between, spear in hand, and singing the war-song of my people. Each flung a spear, but I bent my body, and the spears whistled over me, and I was unhurt. Then, and we were all together, we three, I cast my spear at the one to the right, and it drove into his throat and he pitched backward into the water.

"Great was my surprise thereat, for I had killed a man. I turned to the one on the left and drove strong with my paddle, to meet Death face to face; but the man's second spear, which was his last, but bit into the flesh of my shoulder. Then was I upon him, making no cast, but pressing the point into his breast and working it through him with both my hands. And while I worked, pressing with all my strength, he smote me upon my head, once and twice, with the broad of his paddle.

"Even as the point of the spear sprang out beyond his back, he smote me upon the head. There was a flash, as of bright light, and inside my head I felt something give, with a snap—just like that, with a snap. And the weight that pressed above my eyes so long was lifted, and the band that bound my brows so tight was broken. And a great gladness came upon me, and my heart sang with joy.

"This be death, I thought; wherefore I thought that death was very good. And then I saw the two empty canoes, and I knew that I was not dead, but well again. The blows of the man upon my head had made me well. I knew that I had killed, and the taste of the blood made me fierce, and I drove my paddle into the breast of the Yukon and urged my canoe toward the village of the Mukumuks. The young men behind me gave a great cry. I looked over my shoulder and saw the water foaming white from their paddles——"

"Ay, it foamed white from our paddles," said Mutsak. "For we remembered the command of the Otter, and of Skolka, that we behold with our own eyes the manner of Lone Chief's death. A young man of the Mukumuks, on his way to a salmon trap, beheld the coming of Lone Chief, and of the five score men behind him. And the young man fled in his canoe, straight for the village, that alarm might be given and preparation made. But Lone Chief hurried after him, and we hurried after Lone Chief to behold the manner of his death. Only, in the face of the village, as the young man leaped to the shore, Lone Chief rose up in his canoe and made a mighty cast. And the spear entered the body of the young man above the hips, and the young man fell upon his face.

"Whereupon Lone Chief leaped up the bank war-club in hand, and a great war-cry on his lips, and dashed into the village. The first man he met was Itwilie, chief over the Mukumuks, and him Lone Chief smote upon the head with his war-club, so that he fell dead upon the ground. And for fear we might not behold the manner of his death, we too, the five score young men, leaped to the shore and followed Lone Chief into the village. Only the Mukumuks did not understand, and thought we had come to fight; so their bowthongs sang and their arrows whistled among us. Whereat we forgot our errand, and fell upon them with our spears and clubs: and they being unprepared, there was great slaughter——"

"With my own hands I slew their shaman," proclaimed Lone Chief, his withered face a-work with memory of that old-time day. "With my own hands I slew him, who was a greater shaman than Skolka, our own shaman. And each time I faced a man, I thought, 'Now cometh Death'; and each time I slew the man, and Death came not. It seemed the breath of life was strong in my nostrils and I could not die——"

"And we followed Lone Chief the length of the village and back again," continued Mutsak. "Like a pack of wolves we followed him, back and forth, and here and there, till there were no more Mukumuks left to fight. Then we gathered together five score men-slaves, and double as many women, and countless children, and we set fire and burned all the houses and lodges, and departed. And that was the last of the Mukumuks."

"And that was the last of the Mukumuks," Lone Chief repeated exultantly. "And when we came to our own village, the people were amazed at our burden of wealth and slaves, and in that I was still alive they were more amazed. And my father, the Otter, came trembling with gladness at the things I had done. For he was an old man, and I the last of his sons. And all the tried fighting men came, and the crafty and wise, till all the people were gathered together. And then I arose and, with a voice like thunder, commanded Skolka, the shaman, to stand forth——"

"Ay, O White Man," exclaimed Mutsak. "With a voice like

thunder, that made the people shake at the knees and become afraid."

"And when Skolka had stood forth," Lone Chief went on, "I said that I was not minded to die. Also, I said it were not well that disappointment come to the evil spirits that wait beyond the grave. Wherefore I deemed it fit that the soul of Skolka fare forth into the Unknown, where doubtless it would howl for ever in the dark and endless forest. And then I slew him, as he stood there, in the face of all the people. Even I, Lone Chief, with my own hands, slew Skolka, the shaman, in the face of all the people. And when a murmuring arose, I cried aloud——"

"With a voice like thunder," prompted Mutsak.

"Ay, with a voice like thunder I cried aloud: 'Behold, O ye people! I am Lone Chief, slayer of Skolka, the false shaman! Alone among men have I passed down through the gateway of Death and returned again. Mine eyes have looked upon the unseen things. Mine ears have heard the unspoken words. Greater am I than Skolka the shaman, Greater than all shamans am I. Likewise am I a greater chief than my father, the Otter. All his days did he fight with the Mukumuks, and lo, in one day have I destroyed them all. As with the breathing of a breath have I destroyed them. Wherefore, my father, the Otter, being old, and Skolka, the shaman, being dead, I shall be both chief and shaman. Henceforth shall I be both chief and shaman to you, O my people. And if any man dispute my word, let that man stand forth!'

"I waited, but no man stood forth. Then I cried: 'Hoh! I have tasted blood! Now bring meat, for I am hungry. Break open the caches, tear down the fish-racks, and let the feast be big. Let there be merriment, and songs, not of burial, but marriage. And last of all let the girl Kasaan be brought. The girl Kasaan, who is to be the mother of the children of Lone Chief!'

"And at my words, and because that he was very old, my father, the Otter, wept like a woman, and put his arms about my knees. And from that day I was both chief and shaman. And great honour was mine, and all men yielded me obedience."

"Until the steamboat came," Mutsak prompted.

"Ay," said Lone Chief. "Until the steamboat came."

THE WHALE TOOTH

JACK LONDON

IT was in the early days in Fiji, when John Starhurst arose in the mission-house at Rewa Village and announced his intention of carrying the Gospel throughout all Viti Levu. Now Niti Levu means the " Great Land," it being the largest island in a group composed of many large islands, to say nothing of hundreds of small ones. Here and there on the coasts, living by most precarious tenure, was a sprinkling of missionaries, traders, bêche-de-mer fishers, and whaleship deserters. The smoke of the hot ovens arose under their windows, and the bodies of the slain were dragged by their doors on the way to the feasting.

The Lotu, or the Worship, was progressing slowly, and, often, in crablike fashion. Chiefs, who announced themselves Christians and were welcomed into the body of the chapel, had a distressing habit of backsliding in order to partake of the flesh of some favourite enemy. Eat or be eaten had been the law of the land; and eat or be eaten promised to remain the law of the land for a long time to come. There were chiefs, such as Tanoa, Tuiveikoso, and Tui-kilakila, who had literally eaten hundreds of their fellow-men. But among these gluttons Ra Undreundre ranked highest. Ra Undreundre lived at Takiraki. He kept a register of his gustatory exploits. A row of stones outside his house marked the bodies he had eaten. This row was two hundred and thirty paces long, and the stones in it numbered eight hundred and seventy-two. Each stone represented a body. The row of stones might have been longer, had not Ra Undreundre unfortunately received a spear in the small of his back in a bush skirmish on Somo Somo and been served up on the table of Naungavuli, whose mediocre string of stones numbered only forty-eight.

The hard-worked, fever-stricken missionaries stuck doggedly to their task, at times despairing and looking forward for some special manifestation, some outburst of Pentecostal fire that would bring a glorious harvest of souls. But cannibal Fiji had remained obdurate. The frizzle-headed man-eaters were loath to leave their flesh-pots so long as the harvest of human carcases was plentiful. Sometimes, when the harvest was too plentiful, they imposed on the missionaries by letting the word slip out that on such a day there would be a killing and a barbecue. Promptly the missionaries would buy the

lives of the victims with stick tobacco, fathoms of calico, and quarts of trade-beads. Natheless the chiefs drove a handsome trade in thus disposing of their surplus live meat. Also, they could always go out and catch more.

It was at this juncture that John Starhurst proclaimed that he would carry the Gospel from coast to coast of the Great Land, and that he would begin by penetrating the mountain fastnesses of the headwaters of the Rewa River. His words were received with consternation.

The native teachers wept softly. His two fellow-missionaries strove to dissuade him. The King of Rewa warned him that the mountain dwellers would surely kai-kai him—kai-kai meaning "to eat"—and that he, the King of Rewa, having become Lotu, would be put to the necessity of going to war with the mountain dwellers. That he could not conquer them he was perfectly aware. That they might come down the river and sack Rewa Village he was likewise perfectly aware. But what was he to do? If John Starhurst persisted in going out and being eaten, there would be a war that would cost hundreds of lives.

Later in the day a deputation of Rewa chiefs waited upon John Starhurst. He heard them patiently, and argued patiently with them, though he abated not a whit from his purpose. To his fellow-missionaries he explained that he was not bent upon martyrdom; that the call had come for him to carry the Gospel into Viti Levu, and that he was merely obeying the Lord's wish.

To the traders, who came and objected most strenuously of all, he said: "Your objections are valueless. They consist merely of the damage that may be done your businesses. You are interested in making money, but I am interested in saving souls. The heathen of this dark land must be saved."

John Starhurst was not a fanatic. He would have been the first man to deny the imputation. He was eminently sane and practical. He was sure that his mission would result in good, and he had private visions of igniting the Pentecostal spark in the souls of the mountaineers and of inaugurating a revival that would sweep down out of the mountains and across the length and breath of the Great Land from sea to sea and to the isles in the midst of the sea. There were no wild lights in his mild grey eyes, but only calm resolution and an unfaltering trust in the Higher Power that was guiding him.

One man only he found who approved of his project, and that was Ra Vatu, who secretly encouraged him and offered to lend him guides to the first foothills. John Starhurst, in turn, was greatly pleased by Ra Vatu's conduct. From an incorrigible heathen, with a heart as black as his practices, Ra Vatu was beginning to emanate light. He even spoke of becoming Lotu. True, three years before he had expressed a similar intention, and would have entered the church had not John Starhurst entered objection to his bringing his four wives

along with him. Ra Vatu had had economic and ethical objections to monogamy. Besides, the missionary's hair-splitting objection had offended him ; and, to prove that he was a free agent and a man of honour, he had swung his huge war-club over Starhurst's head. Starhurst had escaped by rushing in under the club and holding on to him until help arrived. But all that was now forgiven and forgotten. Ra Vatu was coming into the church, not merely as a converted heathen, but as a converted polygamist as well. He was only waiting he assured Starhurst, until his oldest wife, who was very sick should die.

John Starhurst journeyed up the sluggish Rewa in one of Ra Vatu's canoes. This canoe was to carry him for two days, when, the head of navigation reached, it would return. Far in the distance, lifted into the sky, could be seen the great smoky mountains that marked the backbone of the Great Land. All day John Starhurst gazed at them with eager yearning.

Sometimes he prayed silently. At other times he was joined in prayer by Narau, a native teacher, who for seven years had been Lotu, ever since the day he had been saved from the hot oven by Dr. James Ellery Brown at the trifling expense of one hundred sticks of tobacco, two cotton blankets, and a large bottle of pain-killer. At the last moment, after twenty hours of solitary supplication and prayer, Narau's ears had heard the call to go forth with John Starhurst on the mission to the mountains.

" Master, I will surely go with thee," he had announced.

John Starhurst had hailed him with sober delight. Truly, the Lord was with him thus to spur on so broken-spirited a creature as Narau.

" I am indeed without spirit, the weakest of the Lord's vessels," Narau explained, the first day in the canoe.

" You should have faith, stronger faith," the missionary chided him.

Another canoe journeyed up the Rewa that day. But it journeyed an hour astern, and it took care not to be seen. This canoe was also the property of Ra Vatu. In it was Erirola, Ra Vatu's first cousin and trusted henchman ; and in the small basket that never left his hand was a whale tooth. It was a magnificent tooth, fully six inches long, beautifully proportioned, the ivory turned yellow and purple with age. This tooth was likewise the property of Ra Vatu ; and in Fiji, when such a tooth goes forth, things usually happen. For this is the virtue of the whale tooth : Whoever accepts it cannot refuse the request that may accompany it or follow it. The request may be anything from a human life to a tribal alliance, and no Fijian is so dead to honour as to deny the request when once the tooth has been accepted. Sometimes the request hangs fire, or the fulfilment is delayed, with untoward consequences.

High up the Rewa, at the village of a chief, Mongondro by name, John Starhurst rested at the end of the second day of the journey. In the morning, attended by Narau, he expected to start on foot for

the smoky mountains that were now green and velvety with nearness. Mongondro was a sweet-tempered, mild-mannered little old chief, shortsighted and afflicted with elephantiasis, and no longer inclined toward the turbulence of war. He received the missionary with warm hospitality, gave him food from his own table, and even discussed religious matters with him. Mongondro was of an inquiring bent of mind, and pleased John Starhurst greatly by asking him to account for the existence and beginning of things. When the missionary had finished his summary of the Creation according to Genesis he saw that Mongondro was deeply affected. The little old chief smoked silently for some time. Then he took the pipe from his mouth and shook his head sadly.

"It cannot be," he said. "I, Mongondro, in my youth, was a good workman with the adze. Yet three months did it take me to make a canoe—a small canoe, a very small canoe. And you say that all this land and water was made by one man——"

"Nay, was made by one God, the only true God," the missionary interrupted.

"It is the same thing," Mongondro went on, "that all the land and all the water, the trees, the fish, and bush, and mountains, the sun, the moon, and the stars, were made in six days! No, no. I tell you that in my youth I was an able man, yet did it require me three months for one small canoe. It is a story to frighten children with; but no man can believe it."

"I am a man," the missionary said.

"True, you are a man. But it is not given to my dark understanding to know what you believe."

"I tell you, I do believe that everything was made in six days."

"So you say, so you say," the old cannibal murmured soothingly.

It was not until after John Starhurst and Narau had gone off to bed that Erirola crept into the chief's house, and, after diplomatic speech, handed the whale tooth to Mongondro.

The old chief held the tooth in his hands for a long time. It was a beautiful tooth, and he yearned for it. Also, he divined the request that must accompany it. "No, no; whale teeth were beautiful," and his mouth watered for it, but he passed it back to Erirola with many apologies.

. . . . . .

In the early dawn John Starhurst was afoot, striding along the bush trail in his big leather boots, at his heels the faithful Narau, himself at the heels of a naked guide lent him by Mongondro to show the way to the next village, which was reached by midday. Here a new guide showed the way. A mile in the rear plodded Erirola, the whale tooth in the basket slung on his shoulder. For two days more he brought up the missionary's rear, offering the tooth to the village chiefs. But village after village refused the tooth. It followed so quickly the missionary's advent that they divined the request that

would be made, and would have none of it.

They were getting deep into the mountains, and Erirola took a secret trail, cut in ahead of the missionary, and reached the stronghold of the Buli of Gatoka. Now the Buli was unaware of John Starhurst's imminent arrival. Also, the tooth was beautiful—an extraordinary specimen, while the colouring of it was of the rarest order. The tooth was presented publicly. The Buli of Gatoka, seated on his best mat, surrounded by his chief men, three busy fly-brushers at his back, deigned to receive from the hand of his herald the whale tooth presented by Ra Vatu and carried into the mountains by his cousin, Erirola. A clapping of hands went up at the acceptation of the present, the assembled headmen, heralds, and fly-brushers crying aloud in chorus :

" A ! woi ! woi ! woi ! A ! woi ! woi ! woi ! A tabua levu ! woi ! woi ! A mudua, mudua, mudua ! "

" Soon will come a man, a white man," Erirola began, after the proper pause. " He is a missionary man, and he will come to-day. Ra Vatu is pleased to desire his boots. He wishes to present them to his good friend, Mongondro, and it is in his mind to send them with the feet along in them, for Mongondro is an old man and his teeth are not good. Be sure, O Buli, that the feet go along in the boots. As for the rest of him, it may stop here."

The delight in the whale tooth faded out of the Buli's eyes, and he glanced about him dubiously. Yet he had already accepted the tooth.

" A little thing like a missionary does not matter," Erirola prompted.

" No, a little thing like a missionary does not matter," the Buli answered, himself again. " Mongondro shall have the boots. Go you young men, some three or four of you, and meet the missionary on the trail. Be sure you bring back the boots as well."

" It is too late," said Erirola. " Listen ! He comes now."

Breaking through the thicket of brush, John Starhurst, with Narau close on his heels, strode upon the scene. The famous boots, having filled in wading the stream, squirted fine jets of water at ever step. Starhurst looked about him with flashing eyes. Upborne by an unwavering trust, untouched by doubt or fear, he exulted in all he saw. He knew that since the beginning of time he was the first white man ever to tread the mountain stronghold of Gatoka.

The grass houses clung to the steep mountain side or overhung the rushing Rewa. On either side towered a mighty precipice. At the best, three hours of sunlight penetrated that narrow gorge. No cocoanuts nor bananas were to be seen, though dense tropic vegetation overran everything, dripping in airy festoons from the sheer lips of the precipices and running riot in all the crannied ledges. At the far end of the gorge the Rewa leaped eight hundred feet in

a single span, while the atmosphere of the rock fortress pulsed to the rhythmic thunder of the fall.

From the Buli's house John Starhurst saw emerging the Buli and his followers.

"I bring you good tidings," was the missionary's greeting.

"Who has sent you?" the Buli rejoined quietly.

"God."

"It is a new name in Viti Levu," the Buli grinned. "Of what islands, villages, or passes may he be chief?"

"He is the chief over all islands, all villages, all passes," John Starhurst answered solemnly. "He is the Lord over heaven and earth, and I am come to bring His word to you."

"Has he sent whale teeth?" was the insolent query.

"No, but more precious than whale teeth is the——"

"It is the custom between chiefs to send whale teeth," the Buli interrupted. "Your chief is either a niggard, or you are a fool, to come empty-handed into the mountains. Behold, a more generous than you is before you."

So saying, he showed the whale tooth he had received from Erirola. Narau groaned.

"It is the whale tooth of Ra Vatu," he whispered to Starhurst, "I know it well. Now we are undone."

"A gracious thing," the missionary answered, passing his hand through his long beard and adjusting his glasses. "Ra Vatu has arranged that we should be well received."

But Narau groaned again, and backed away from the heels he had dogged so faithfully.

"Ra Vatu is soon to become Lotu," Starhurst explained, "and I have come bringing the Lotu to you."

"I want none of your Lotu," said the Buli proudly. "And it is in my mind that you will be clubbed this day."

The Buli nodded to one of his big mountaineers, who stepped forward, swinging a club. Marau bolted into the nearest house, seeking to hide among the women and mats; but John Starhurst sprang in under the club and threw his arms around his executioner's neck. From this point of vantage he proceeded to argue. He was arguing for his life, and he knew it; but he was neither excited nor afraid.

"It would be an evil thing for you to kill me," he told the man. "I have done you no wrong, nor have I done the Buli wrong."

So well did he cling to the neck of the one man that they dared not strike with their clubs. And he continued to cling and to dispute for his life with those who clamoured for his death.

"I am John Starhurst," he went on calmly. "I have laboured in Fiji for three years, and I have done it for no profit. I am here among you for good. Why should any man kill me? To kill me will not profit any man."

The Buli stole a look at the whale tooth. He was well paid for the deed.

The missionary was surrounded by a mass of naked savages, all struggling to get at him. The death song, which is the song of the oven, was raised, and his expostulations could no longer be heard. But so cunningly did he twine and wreathe his body about his captor's that the death-blow could not be struck. Errola smiled, and the Buli grew angry.

"Away with you!" he cried. "A nice story to go back to the coast—a dozen of you, and one missionary without weapons, weak as a woman, overcoming all of you."

"Wait, O Buli," John Starhurst called out from the thick of the scuffle, "and I will overcome even you. For my weapons are Truth and Right, and no man can withstand them."

"Come to me, then," the Buli answered, "for my weapon is only a poor miserable club, and, as you say, it cannot withstand you."

The group separated from him, and John Starhurst stood alone, facing the Buli, who was leaning on an enormous, knotted war-club.

"Come to me, missionary man, and overcome me," the Buli challenged.

"Even so will I come to you and overcome you," John Starhurst made answer, first wiping his spectacles, and settling them properly, then beginning his advance.

The Buli raised the club and waited.

"In the first place, my death will profit you nothing," began the argument.

"I leave the answer to my club," was the Buli's reply.

And to every point he made the same reply, at the same time watching the missionary closely in order to forestall that cunning run-in under the lifted club. Then, and for the first time, John Starhurst knew that his death was at hand. He made no attempt to run in. Bareheaded, he stood in the sun and prayed aloud—the mysterious figure of the inevitable white man, who, with Bible, bullet, or rum bottle, has confronted the amazed savage in his every stronghold. Even so stood John Starhurst in the rock fortress of the Buli of Gatoka.

"Forgive them, for they know not what they do," he prayed. "O Lord! have mercy upon Fiji. Have compassion for Fiji. O Jehovah, hear us for His sake, Thy Son, whom Thou didst give, that through Him all men might also become Thy children. From Thee we came, and our mind is that to Thee we may return. The land is dark, O Lord, the land is dark. But Thou art mighty to save. Reach out Thy hand, O Lord, and save Fiji, poor cannibal Fiji."

The Buli grew impatient.

"Now will I answer thee," he muttered, at the same time swinging his club with both hands.

Narau, hiding among the women and the mats, heard the impact

of the blow and shuddered. Then the death song arose, and he knew his beloved missionary's body was being dragged to the oven as he heard the words:

"Drag me gently. Drag me gently."

"For I am the champion of my land."

"Give thanks! Give thanks! Give thanks!"

Next, a single voice arose out of the din, asking:

"Where is the brave man?"

A hundred voices bellowed the answer:

"Gone to be dragged into the oven and cooked."

"Where is the coward?" the single voice demanded.

"Gone to report!" the hundred voices bellowed back. "Gone to report! Gone to report!"

Narau groaned in anguish of spirit. The words of the old song were true. He was the coward, and nothing remained to him but to go and report.

HALLIE ERMINIE RIVES

B. 1878

IN THE WAKE OF WAR

THERE is nothing so elusive yet so fascinating as a chance resemblance. We walk a street crowded with thousands of human atoms like ourselves, yet each meaningless, unindividual. The mass has the consistency of a stream of water parted by a stone. Suddenly one of these atoms acquires form, colour, substance, and character; its individuality strikes a chord in the brain. A thousand disassociate fragments—memory-worn strands of time and place—struggle to coalesce, to reweave themselves into a pattern we once knew. Our thoughts give aid. Recollection puzzles itself, finds itself impotent, rages at its own powerlessness. At such a moment the mind recurs again and again with painful insistence to the problem, and the chance resemblance, by reason of aggravation, acquires an importance wholly disproportionate. The man who pursues such a will-o'-the-wisp memory does so protesting, in spite of himself.

It was in some such frame of mind that Brent Maxwell stood looking out across the desolate hillside. The landscape still mourned, in blackened stone walls and thinned forests, the devastation of Sherman's march to the sea. The bare unpromise of the scene was in his soul. He knew the gaunt poverty that follows in the wake of war. He had fought loyally for the Union. And now, after fifteen years of reconstruction, he had learned that Appomattox had dawned only upon the first chapter of defeat. The fierce patriotism which had led him, a youth of enthusiasm and dreams of the glory of sacrifice, to leave his place and portion in the North when the first call sounded, and the earnestness of intention with which he had flung himself into the newly breathing industrial life of a Southern city, had had time to cool and sober. In spite of success the very intensity of the struggle against adverse conditions had bred in him a resentment against the necessity which made green fields a desert, plantation a waste, and a smiling country a cemetery of unmarked graves. Something of the dogged sadness which hung on the people among whom he elected to dwell had centred into him. He had lived down the hatred and the sneer, but the process had made him bitter against the circumstances which had given this hatred rise.

On this early morning his thoughts, which had been busy esti-

mating the possibilities of the farm, whose deeds he had in his pocket, and whose foreclosure had brought him from his own city, had been suddenly arrested and turned from their channel. A rattling vehicle had passed him, containing two figures—a man and a woman. The faces of both interested him. The woman's was sad and sober-sweet, surmounted by pearl-grey hair. There was a little colour in her cheeks. The man had dead white hair and beard, with face blue-tinged and shifting eyes of yellow. He wore a heavy butternut overcoat and a knitted nubia of childishly bright colours.

There was something in this last face that started reverberating echoes in Maxwell's brain. An intangible hand was at work tying together loose ends of recollection. He knew and yet he did not know. Wherever he looked, as he plodded over the farm land he saw this blue face and dodging gaze. It came before him with an absurd incongruity and yet with a reiterate malevolence.

The sun was high as he walked back toward the village, past the great, grey-columned house whose shambling porticoes pointed to a past of wealth and grandeur. As he neared the gate a sudden cry made him quicken his steps. A repeating scream—a man's, yet wolf-like, rising and falling with monotonous inflections—filled all the hollows with sound. Its note had a quality of the animal that thickened the hearer's blood. It came from the house. Maxwell broke into a run, burst open the gate and rushed toward the porch.

Rounding a clump of evergreens he saw a strange spectacle. Seated on the ground was the blue-faced man, his fingers clutching the stubble, his lips emitting the beast-like screams which had brought Maxwell from the roadway. Bending over him, with her back toward the gate, was the lady of the sad face and the pearl-grey hair. She was smoothing the thin fringe from the sunken temples, bending now and then to lay her lips caressingly and sobbingly upon his head. From under her arm the yellow eyes looked out straight toward Maxwell. He felt them pass shiftily across his face with a sense of shrinking repulsion. The volume of screams showed no abatement.

The tones with which the woman sought to soothe this outburst were exquisitely tender. "Poor Victor!" she was saying; "poor, poor boy!"

Maxwell had stopped short at the mad lustre of those yellow eyes; the woman had not heard his approach. With a strange tightening of the throat he shrank behind a bush and retreated to the road, looking fearfully back over his shoulder. Throughout the long walk back to the village hotel, at every turning, this picture started before him—a slight, grey-gowned figure with hands whose trembling motions suggested the settling of a dove to guard its young. and from under whose caress gleamed out topaz eyes in which lurked the devil of madness.

He stared over the table of the low-ceiled, smoky-beamed dining-

room, unheeding the conversation, his mind pursuing the vagrant resemblance of the morning. He came to himself with a sort of shock to hear his neighbour say : " That's the first time I've seen ole Vic Brockman for two years. Miss Ma'y Ann took him drivin' this mornin'—you ought to seen 'em. The ole fellow had on a nubia that had as many colours as a peacock's tail. Queer how he hangs onto life all these years," he continued reflectively. " It'd be a blessin' if he'd shuffle off. Speakin' of women—there's a woman for you ! Job Stacker, when he lived on the next farm, used to say that she cared for that idiot brother of hers ever since the war like a baby. If he'd got killed out and out, instead of comin' home with no top to his head and no sense in it, it'd been better for her. Then she could have married that sweetheart of hers and had troubles of her own."

He turned to Maxwell. " I was talkin'," he said, " of Miss Brockman, who owns the Pool place—that big white house over the hill. It's a pity the mortgage changed hands. I suppose Miss Ma'y Ann is going to be sold out. It's hard. Old Squire Pool, her grandfather, was the biggest man in four counties, and befo' the war her ma was the high-headest girl you ever saw. Wonder who got that mortgage ? "

In the evening, as Maxwell and the village lawyer, who was Justice of the Peace, Conveyancer, and Notary Public all in one, walked in the fading light up the hill toward the property which was so soon to be sent to the hammer, there was small conversation between them. The papers requiring the final signature protruded from Maxwell's great-coat pocket. His mind was wandering through a labyrinth of recollection pursuing the phantom of a blue face surmounted by rough, white hair, and two eyes shot with feline yellow, which met his and wavered away in ferret uneasiness. The likeness clung to him with a wilful persistence, and he swept his hand impatiently across his eyes as if to banish the thing that baffled him.

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As the two men seated themselves in the lamplight of the great room, which yet bore the inextinguishable marks of aristocracy, Maxwell became unpleasantly aware of a huddled object on a sofa, which seemed to create in itself a centre of attraction. The errand was not a pleasant one, though relieved by the serene face and low tones that belong to the gentlewoman ; but in the lax face of old Victor Brockman was another element—an element of arrested progress, of piteous recoil—the genius of unconscious despair. It drew Maxwell while it repelled him. He found himself turning his head to gaze upon it.

He realised in the midst of a genial sentence that the yellow eyes had ceased their roving, and had settled, fixed and stealthy, upon his face. The aggravating resemblance again caught his attention.

Thereafter he ceased to be himself—ceased in some inexplicable way to feel his will and intention master of the situation. The idiot's gaze had got upon his nerves. He found himself shifting in his seat, pushing his chair back by slow degrees to bring the sofa between him and it. Now and then he turned his eyes unwillingly to meet that look: the yellow eyes had ceased to twitch, and now rested with, it seemed to him, a quiet, dreamy hatred upon his own. The gaze affected him strangely; it angered him. He felt himself put out by this meaningless persistence. His smooth sentences flowed with less ease, and he felt a nervous contraction in the muscles of his throat.

Miss Mary Ann had drawn nearer to the squat occupant of the sofa, and her hand, trembling unwontedly, he thought, reached out now and then to touch the frayed sleeve. And surely the lawyer was looking at him closely. Maxwell felt himself sweating, and yet internally scoffing at this strange mood that had smitten him.

The situation was a simple one, and yet it had suddenly become impossible to him. He, Brent Maxwell, landowner, dealer in farm properties, had come to present an official paper for signature. He had done it scores of times, and yet the usual conversation with which custom softens the unpleasant alternatives of business failure into kindly and courteous agreement had become suddenly a way of pain—a chapter of indefinable reproach. A look of vacant, yellow eyes, grown steadfast, was making this hour one of loathing and horror.

As the last words were spoken and the necessary signatures were affixed, he snatched the papers from the lawyer's hands, crushed them into his pocket, and in sudden revulsion, his tense nerves released, sprang to his feet.

The effect upon the huddled figure opposite him was instantaneous and terrible. It cringed backward, with a shrinking gesture of fear and agony. Its palsied arms, shaking and uncertain, wavered before its face. A shriek came from its lips, but this time not the monotonous, wordless wail of habit, but an articulate cry: "My God! My head! Don't strike me again!"

Maxwell dimly heard the sobbing cry with which the sister's arms went round the cowering, abject figure, and the lawyer's abrupt ejaculation of astonishment and reassurance, as he rushed to the door and flung himself out into the frosty evening. His breath was coming heavily, and his fingers worked nervously in and out of clinched fists. As the sky opened before him, a vision hurled itself with the appalling directness of a thunderbolt before him—a vision of an acre of bloody, trampled sward, iron-sown, and blue with pungent wreaths of smoke. In the foreground a dismantled gun, prone upon whose stock a figure lay, with blackened face and tattered grey uniform, and over it a second figure swinging a clubbed musket, remorselessly cruel with the lust of war. The crest of that

spattered knoll strewn with quiet forms—these two alone fiercely erect. Then the clubbed weapon descended. From the limp figure stretched across the gun rose two protesting arms; two hazel eyes looked from beneath the bloody mat of hair, and a voice shrill and terrifying: "My God! My head! don't strike me again!"

The vision blurred. Gusts of smoke came in between. Did the blue figure strike again? Did it? *Did it?*

Maxwell threw his hands toward the night sky that flared with that quick rose of condemnation and died again, as though appealing and inviting doom. The vision had scarce faded into the dim of the early night when the lawyer came down the steps. It was as though he had approached, black-robed and grotesque, from the corner of the dimming picture—a vengeance witnessing and impeaching, binding him, the Brent Maxwell of that savage battery charge, to the Brent Maxwell of this day, a strong man flying from the piteous pallor of a shrunken and deranged wreck.

The one upon whom this sudden panic of soul had crashed like a falling tower gripped him fiercely by the arms. "The man in there," he said hoarsely, "the man with the blue face and yellow eyes—the man that looked at me! Did you see him look at me?"

The other shrank back half fearfully. "Why, Maxwell," he said, "what's the matter? It was merely a fit of some sort. I thought you knew he was crazy. Why, man, you're shaking! Come along and we'll get something to warm us up."

"Did you see him put up his hands?"

The lawyer drew away his arm almost angrily. "Heavens!" he said, "you're almost as bad as the old man himself. He's crazy, I tell you, plumb crazy, and has been ever since they brought him home from the war. He was struck in the head by a shell or something."

"Yes, yes. Where? Where was it? What battle was it?"

"I've always heard it was at Missionary Ridge." The match he struck against his boot-heel burned, spluttering, as he bit the end from a cigar.

Maxwell suddenly drew from his pocket the packet of papers; the parchment crackled as he reached forward and held a curling corner to the flame. While the lawyer stood in a maze Maxwell waved it, a flaming funnel, around his head until it scorched his fingers. As he dropped it to the ground, a mass of slowly blackening embers, a white shadow sprang out of the surrounding circle of blackness. It was Miss Mary Ann.

"Miss Ma'y Ann," cried the lawyer, "do you see what he's doing? He's burned up the mortgage! He's burned it up! That's all that's left of it there on the ground!"

Miss Mary Ann stepped forward half fearfully, her fascinated eyes on the glowing firebrand between them. She clasped her hands together. "Sir," she said painfully, "sir"—then she stopped.

An overmastering desire seized Maxwell to take upon himself the act of that dead day—to shout to them both that he, *he*, had been asked mercy and had denied it. It was the right of war, but now, after all these years, it had recoiled upon him in shame. Circumstance had again put in his hand the weapon ; the lust of acquisition called upon him to strike, but as he stood face to face with this new victim, out of that red mist of the stained past that cry had sounded, and his hand dropped nerveless before the same helpless accusing eyes. He would have shouted that it was not charity, not kindness, that spared that roof, but self-accusation—a yearning for atonement and for absolution.

He received her broken words of gratitude with a sense of shame upon his soul, and the lawyer's bluff comments upon his benefaction pierced him like swords of searing.

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As Maxwell turned again toward the village, he rested his gaze upon the hillside, sleeping under the early stars. Field and knoll were covered silvery with the sheen of hoar-frost lances. It seemed the dwarf symbol of buried armies—thousands upon thousands of the dead, who died with upthrust bayonets still standing to guard in death the integrity of homes. And standing thus, with the sorrow of his thought upon him, Maxwell cried to his own soul, no less than to his land, to glory, to power, to war, and to victory :

" What have you done ? What have you done ? "

IRVIN S. COBB

B. 1876

THE BELLED BUZZARD

THERE was a swamp known as Little Niggerwool, to distinguish it from Big Niggerwool, which lay across the river. It was traversable only by those who knew it well—an oblong stretch of tawny mud and tawny water, measuring maybe four miles its longest way and two miles roughly at its widest ; and it was full of cypress and stunted swamp oak, with edgings of canebrake and rank weeds ; and in one place, where a ridge crossed it from side to side, it was snaggled like an old jaw with dead tree trunks, rising close-ranked and thick as teeth. It was untenanted of living things—except, down below, there were snakes and mosquitoes, and a few wading and swimming fowl ; and up above, those big woodpeckers that the country people called logcocks—larger than pigeons, with flaming crests and spiky tails—swooping in their long loping flight from snag to snag, always just out of gunshot of the chance invader and uttering a strident cry which matched those surroundings so fitly that it might well have been the voice of the swamp itself.

On one side Little Niggerwool drained its saffron waters off into a sluggish creek, where summer ducks bred, and on the other it ended abruptly at a natural bank of high ground, along which the county turnpike ran. The swamp came right up to the road and thrust its fringe of reedy, weedy undergrowth forward as though in challenge to the good farm lands that were spread beyond the barrier. At the time I am speaking of it was midsummer, and from these canes and weeds and water-plants there came a smell so rank as almost to be overpowering. They grew thick as a curtain, making a blank green wall taller than a man's head.

Along the dusty stretch of road fronting the swamp nothing living had stirred for half an hour or more. And so at length the weed-stems rustled and parted, and out from among them a man came forth silently and cautiously. He was an old man—an old man who had once been fat, but with age had grown lean again, so that now his skin was by odds too large for him. It lay on the back of his neck in folds. Under the chin he was pouched like a pelican and about the jowls was wattled like a turkey gobbler.

He came out upon the road slowly and stopped there, switching

his legs absently with the stalk of a horseweed. He was in his shirt-sleeves—a respectable, snuffy old figure ; evidently a man deliberate in words and thoughts and actions. There was something about him suggestive of an old staid sheep that had been engaged in a clandestine transaction and was afraid of being found out.

He had made amply sure no one was in sight before he came out of the swamp, but now, to be doubly certain, he watched the empty road—first up, then down—for a long half minute, and fetched a sighing breath of satisfaction. His eyes fell upon his feet, and, taken with an idea, he stepped back to the edge of the road and with a wisp of crabgrass wiped his shoes clean of the swamp mud, which was of a different colour and texture from the soil of the upland. All his life Squire H. B. Gathers had been a careful, cannyman,and he had need to be doubly careful on this summer morning. Having disposed of the mud on his feet, he settled his white straw hat down firmly upon his head, and, crossing the road, he climbed a stake-and-rider fence laboriously and went plodding sedately across a weed-field and up a slight slope towards his house, half a mile away, upon the crest of the little hill.

He felt perfectly natural—not like a man who had just taken a fellow-man's life—but natural and safe, and well satisfied with himself and with his morning's work. And he was safe ; that was the main thing—absolutely safe. Without hitch or hindrance he had done the thing for which he had been planning and waiting and longing all these months. There had been no slip or mischance ; the whole thing had worked out as plainly and simply as two and two make four. No living creature except himself knew of the meeting in the early morning at the head of Little Niggerwool, exactly where the squire had figured they should meet ; none knew of the device by which the other man had been lured deeper and deeper in the swamp to the exact spot where the gun was hidden. No one had seen the two of them enter the swamp ; no one had seen the squire emerge, three hours later, alone.

The gun, having served its purpose, was hidden again, in a place no mortal eye would ever discover. Face downward, with a hole between his shoulder-blades, the dead man was lying where he might lie undiscovered for months or for years, or for ever. His pedlar's pack was buried in the mud so deep that not even the probing crawfishes could find it. He would never be missed probably. There was but the slightest likelihood that inquiry would ever be made for him—let alone a search. He was a stranger and a foreigner, the dead man was, whose comings and goings made no great stir in the neighbourhood, and whose failure to come again would be taken as a matter of course—just one of those shiftless, wandering Dagoes, here to-day and gone to-morrow. That was one of the best things about it—these Dagoes never had any people in this country to worry about them or look for them when they disappeared. And so it was

all over and done with, and nobody the wiser. The squire clapped his hands together briskly with the air of a man dismissing a subject from his mind for good, and mended his gait.

He felt no stabbings of conscience. On the contrary, a glow of gratification filled him. His house was saved from scandal; his present wife would philander no more—before his very eyes—with these young Dagoes, who came from nobody knew where, with packs on their backs and persuasive, wheedling tongues in their heads. At this thought the squire raised his head and considered his homestead. It looked good to him—the small white cottage among the honey locusts, with beehives and flower-beds about it; the tidy white-washed fence; the sound outbuildings at the back, and the well-tilled acres round about.

At the fence he halted and turned about, carelessly and casually, and looked back along the way he had come. Everything was as it should be—the weed-field steaming in the heat; the empty road stretching along the crooked ridge like a long grey snake sunning itself; and beyond it, massing up, the dark, cloaking stretch of swamp. Everything was all right, but—— The squire's eyes, in their loose sacs of skin, narrowed and squinted. Out of the blue arch away over yonder a small black dot had resolved itself and was swinging to and fro, like a mote. A buzzard—hey? Well, there were always buzzards about on a clear day like this. Buzzards were nothing to worry about—almost any time you could see one buzzard, or a dozen buzzards if you were a mind to look for them.

But this particular buzzard now—wasn't he making for Little Niggerwool? The squire did not like the idea of that. He had not thought of the buzzards until this minute. Sometimes when cattle strayed the owners had been known to follow the buzzards, knowing mighty well that if the buzzards led the way to where the stray was, the stray would be past the small salvage of hide and hoofs—but the owner's doubts would be set at rest for good and all.

There was a grain of disquiet in this. The squire shook his head to drive the thought away—yet it persisted, coming back like a midge dancing before his face. Once at home, however, Squire Gathers deported himself in a perfectly normal manner. With the satisfied proprietorial eye of an elderly husband who has no rivals, he considered his young wife, busied about her household duties. He sat in an easy-chair upon his front gallery and read his yesterday's *Courier-Journal* which the rural carrier had brought him; but he kept stepping out into the yard to peer up into the sky and all about him. To the second Mrs. Gathers he explained that he was looking for weather signs. A day as hot and still as this one was a regular weather-breeder; there ought to be rain before night.

"Maybe so," she said; "but looking's not going to bring rain."

Nevertheless the squire continued to look. There was really nothing to worry about; still at midday he did not eat much dinner,

and before his wife was half through with hers he was back on the gallery. His paper was cast aside and he was watching. The original buzzard—or, anyhow, he judged it was the first one he had seen—was awinging back and forth in great pendulum swings, but closer down toward the swamp—closer and closer—until it looked from that distance as though the buzzard flew almost at the level of the tallest snags there. And on beyond this first buzzard, coursing above him, were other buzzards. Were there four of them? No; there were five—five in all.

Such is the way of the buzzard—that shifting black question-mark which punctuates a Southern sky. In the woods a shoat or a sheep or a horse lies down to die. At once, coming seemingly out of nowhere, appears a black spot, up five hundred feet or a thousand in the air. In broad loops and swirls this dot swings round and round and round, coming a little closer to earth at every turn and always with one particular spot upon the earth for the axis of its wheel. Out of space also other moving spots emerge and grow larger as they tack and jibe and drop nearer, coming in their leisurely buzzard way to the feast. There is no haste—the feast will wait. If it is a dumb creature that has fallen stricken the grim coursers will sooner or later be assembled about it and alongside it, scrouging ever closer and closer to the dying thing, with awkward out-thrustings of their naked necks and great dust-raising flaps of the huge, unkempt wings; lifting their feathered shanks high and stiffly like old crippled grave-diggers in overalls that are too tight—but silent and patient all, offering no attack until the last tremor runs through the stiffening carcass and the eyes glaze over. To humans the buzzard pays a deeper meed of respect—he hangs aloft longer; but in the end he comes. No scavenger shark, no carrion crab, ever chambered more grisly secrets in his digestive processes than this big charnel bird. Such is the way of the buzzard.

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The squire missed his afternoon nap, a thing that had not happened in years. He stayed on the front gallery and kept count. Those moving distant black specks typified uneasiness for the squire—not fear exactly, or panic, or anything akin to it, but a nibbling, nagging kind of uneasiness. Time and again he said to himself that he would not think about them any more; but he did—unceasingly.

By supper time there were seven of them.

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He slept light and slept badly. It was not the thought of that dead man lying yonder in Little Niggerwool that made him toss and fume while his wife snored gently alongside him. It was something else altogether. Finally his stirrings roused her and she asked him drowsily what ailed him. Was he sick? Or bothered about anything?

Irritated, he answered her snappishly. Certainly nothing was bothering him, he told her. It was a hot enough night—wasn't it? And when a man got a little along in life he was apt to be a light sleeper—wasn't that so? Well, then? She turned upon her side and slept again with her light, purring snore. The squire lay awake, thinking hard and waiting for day to come.

At the first faint pink-and-grey glow he was up and out upon the gallery. He cut a comic figure standing there in his shirt in the half light, with the dewlap at his throat dangling grotesquely in the neck opening of the unbuttoned garment, and his bare bowed legs showing, splotched and varicose. He kept his eyes fixed on the skyline below, to the south. Buzzards are early risers too. Presently, as the heavens shimmered with the miracle of sunrise, he could make them out—six or seven, or maybe eight.

An hour after breakfast the squire was on his way down through the weed-field to the county road. He went half eagerly, half unwillingly. He wanted to make sure about those buzzards. It might be that they were aiming for the old pasture at the head of the swamp. There were sheep grazing there—and it might be that a sheep had died. Buzzards were notoriously fond of sheep, when dead. Or, if they were pointed for the swamp, he must satisfy himself exactly what part of the swamp it was. He was at the stake-and-rider fence when a mare came jogging down the road, drawing a buggy with a man in it. At sight of the squire in the field the man pulled up.

"Hi, squire!" he saluted. "Goin' somewheres?"

"No; jest knockin' about," the squire said—"jest sorter lookin' the place over."

"Hot agin—ain't it?" said the other.

The squire allowed that it was, for a fact, mighty hot. Commonplaces of gossip followed this—county politics and a neighbour's wife sick of breakbone fever down the road a piece. The subject of crops succeeded inevitably. The squire spoke of the need of rain. Instantly he regretted it, for the other man, who was by way of being a weather wiseacre, cocked his head aloft to study the sky for any signs of clouds.

"Wonder whut all them buzzards are doin' yonder, squire," he said, pointing upward with his whipstock.

"Whut buzzards—where?" asked the squire with an elaborate note of carelessness in his voice.

"Right yonder, over Little Niggerwool—see 'em there?"

"Oh, yes," the squire made answer. "Now I see 'em. They ain't doin' nothin', I reckin—jest flyin' round same as they always do in clear weather."

"Must be somethin' dead over there!" speculated the man in the buggy.

"A hawg probably," said the squire promptly—almost too

promptly. "There's likely to be hawgs usin' in Niggerwool. Bristow, over on the other side from here—he's got a big drove of hawgs."

"Well, mebbe so," said the man; "but hawgs is a heap more apt to be feedin' on high ground, seems like to me. Well, I'll be gittin' along towards town. G'day, squire." And he slapped the lines down on the mare's flank and jogged off through the dust.

He could not have suspected anything—that man couldn't. As the squire turned away from the road and headed for his house he congratulated himself upon that stroke of his in bringing in Bristow's hogs; and yet there remained this disquieting note in the situation, that buzzards flying, and especially buzzards flying over Little Niggerwool, made people curious—made them ask questions.

He was half-way across the weed-field when, above the hum of insect life, above the inward clamour of his own busy speculations, there came to his ear dimly and distantly a sound that made him halt and cant his head to one side the better to hear it. Somewhere, a good way off, there was a thin, thready, broken strain of metallic clinking and clanking—an eerie ghost-chime ringing. It came nearer and became plainer—tonk-tonk-tonk; then the tonks all running together briskly.

A sheepbell or a cowbell—that was it; but why did it seem to come from overhead, from up in the sky, like? And why did it shift so abruptly from one quarter to another—from left to right and back again to left? And how was it that the clapper seemed to strike so fast? Not even the breachiest of breachy young heifers could be expected to tinkle a cowbell with such briskness. The squire's eye searched the earth and the sky, his troubled mind giving to his eye a quick and flashing scrutiny. He had it. It was not a cow at all. It was not anything that went on four legs.

One of the loathly flock had left the others. The orbit of his swing had carried him across the road and over Squire Gathers' land. He was sailing right toward and over the squire now. Craning his flabby neck, the squire could make out the unwholesome contour of the huge bird. He could see the ragged black wings—a buzzard's wings are so often ragged and uneven—and the naked throat; the slim, naked head; the big feet folded up against the dingy belly. And he could see a bell too—an undersized cowbell—that dangled at the creature's breast and jangled incessantly. All his life nearly Squire Gathers had been hearing about the Belled Buzzard. Now with his own eye he was seeing him.

Once, years and years and years ago, some one trapped a buzzard, and before freeing it clamped about its skinny neck a copper band with a cowbell pendent from it. Since then the bird so ornamented has been seen a hundred times—and heard oftener—over an area as wide as half the continent. It has been reported, now in Kentucky, now in Texas, now in North Carolina—now anywhere between

the Ohio River and the Gulf. Crossroads correspondents take their pens in hand to write to the country papers that on such and such a date, at such a place, So-and-So saw the Belled Buzzard. Always it is the Belled Buzzard, never a belled buzzard. The Belled Buzzard is an institution.

There must be more than one of them. It seems hard to believe that one bird, even a buzzard in his prime, and protected by law in every Southern state and known to be a bird of great age, could live so long and range so far and wear a clinking cowbell all the time! Probably other jokers have emulated the original joker; probably if the truth were known there have been a dozen such; but the country people will have it that there is only one Belled Buzzard—a bird that bears a charmed life and on his neck a never-silent bell.

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Squire Gathers regarded it a most untoward thing that the Belled Buzzard should have come just at this time. The movements of ordinary, unmarked buzzards mainly concerned only those whose stock had strayed; but almost anybody with time to spare might follow this rare and famous visitor, this belled and feathered junkman of the sky. Supposing now that some one followed it to-day—maybe followed it even to a certain thick clump of cypress in the middle of Little Niggerwool!

But at this particular moment the Belled Buzzard was heading directly away from that quarter. Could it be following him? Of course not! It was just by chance that it flew along the course the squire was taking. But, to make sure, he veered off sharply, away from the footpath into the high weeds so that the startled grasshoppers sprayed up in front of him in fan-like flights.

He was right; it was only a chance. The Belled Buzzard swung off too, but in the opposite direction, with a sharp tonking of its bell, and flapping hard, was in a minute or two out of hearing and sight, past the trees to the westward.

Again the squire skimped his dinner, and again he spent the long drowsy afternoon upon his front gallery. In all the sky there were now no buzzards visible, belled or unbelled—they had settled to earth somewhere; and this served somewhat to soothe the squire's pestered mind. This does not mean, though, that he was by any means easy in his thoughts. Outwardly he was calm enough, with the ruminative judicial air befitting the oldest justice of the peace in the county; but, within him, a little something gnawed unceasingly at his nerves like one of those small white worms that are to be found in seemingly sound nuts. About once in so long a tiny spasm of the muscles would contract the dewlap under his chin. The squire had never heard of that play, made famous by a famous player, wherein the murdered victim was a pedlar too, and a clamouring bell the voice of unappeasable remorse in the murderer's ear. As a strict churchgoer the squire had no use for players or for

play-actors, and so was spared that added canker to his conscience. It was bad enough as it was.

That night, as on the night before, the old man's sleep was broken and fitful and disturbed by dreaming in which he heard a metal clapper striking against a brazen surface. This was one dream that came true. Just after daybreak he heaved himself out of bed with a flop of his broad bare feet upon the floor, and stepped to the window and peered out. Half seen in the pinkish light, the Belled Buzzard flapped directly over his roof and flew due south, right toward the swamp—drawing a direct line through the air between the slayer and the victim—or, anyway, so it seemed to the watcher, grown suddenly tremulous.

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Knee-deep in yellow swamp water the squire squatted, with his shotgun cocked and loaded and ready, waiting to kill the bird that now typified for him guilt and danger and an abiding great fear. Gnats plagued him and about him frogs croaked. Almost overhead a log-cock clung lengthwise to a snag, watching him. Snake doctors, limber, long insects with bronze bodies and filmy wings, went back and forth like small living shuttles. Other buzzards passed and repassed, but the squire waited, forgetting the cramps in his elderly limbs and the discomfort of the water in his shoes.

At length he heard the bell. It came nearer and nearer, and the Belled Buzzard swung overhead not sixty feet up, its black bulk a fair target against the blue. He aimed and fired, both barrels bellowing at once and a fog of thick powder smoke enveloping him. Through the smoke he saw the bird careen, and its bell jangled furiously; then the buzzard righted itself and was gone, fleeing so fast that the sound of its bell was hushed almost instantly. Two long wing feathers drifted slowly down; torn discs of gunwadding and shredded green scraps of leaves descended about the squire in a little shower.

He cast his empty gun from him, so that it fell in the water and disappeared; and he hurried out of the swamp as fast as his shaky legs would take him, splashing himself with mire and water to his eyebrows. Mucked with mud, breathing in great gulps, trembling, a suspicious figure to any eye, he burst through the weed curtain and staggered into the open, his caution all gone and a vast desperation fairly choking him—but the grey road was empty and the field beyond the road was empty and, except for him, the whole world seemed empty and silent.

As he crossed the field Squire Gathers composed himself. With plucked handfuls of grass he cleansed himself of much of the swamp mire that coated him over; but the little white worm that gnawed at his nerves had become a cold snake that was coiled about his heart, squeezing it tighter and tighter!

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This episode of the attempt to kill the Belled Buzzard occurred in the afternoon of the third day. In the forenoon of the fourth, the weather being still hot, with cloudless skies and no air stirring, there was a rattle of warped wheels in the squire's lane and a hail at his yard fence. Coming out upon his gallery from the innermost darkened room of his house, where he had been stretched upon a bed, the squire shaded his eyes from the glare and saw the constable of his own magisterial district sitting in a buggy at the gate, waiting.

The old man went down the dirt-path slowly, almost reluctantly, with his head twisted up sidewise, listening, watching; but the constable sensed nothing strange about the other's gait and posture; the constable was full of the news he brought. He began to unload the burden of it without preamble.

"Mornin', Squire Gathers. There's been a dead man found in Little Niggerwool—and you're wanted."

He did not notice that the squire was holding on with both hands to the gate, but he did notice that the squire had a sick look out of his eyes and a dead, pasty colour in his face; and he noticed—but attached no meaning to it—that when the squire spoke his voice seemed flat and hollow.

"Wanted—for—whut?" The squire forced the words out of his throat, pumped them out fairly.

"Why, to hold the inquest," explained the constable. "The coroner's sick abed, and he said you bein' the nearest jestice of the peace you should serve."

"Oh," said the squire with more ease. "Well where is it—the body?"

"They taken it to Bristow's place and put it in his stable for the present. They brought it out over on that side and his place was the nearest. If you'll hop in here with me, squire, I'll ride you right over there now. There's enough men already gathered to make up a jury, I reckin."

"I—I ain't well," demurred the squire. "I've been sleepin' porely these last few nights. It's the heat," he added quickly.

"Well, suh, you don't look very brash, and that's a fact," said the constable; "but this here job ain't goin' to keep you long. You see it's in such shape—the body is—that there ain't no way of makin' out who the feller was nor whut killed him. There ain't nobody reported missin' in this county as we know of, either; so I jedge a verdict of a unknown person dead from unknown causes would be about the correct thing. And we kin git it all over mighty quick and put him underground right away, suh—if you'll go along now."

"I'll go," agreed the squire, almost quivering in his new-born eagerness. "I'll go right now." He did not wait to get his coat or to notify his wife of the errand that was taking him. In his shirt-sleeves he climbed into the buggy, and the constable turned his

horse and clucked him into a trot. And now the squire asked the question that knocked at his lips demanding to be asked—the question the answer to which he yearned for and dreaded.

"How did they come to find—it?"

"Well, suh, that's a funny thing," said the constable. "Early this mornin' Bristow's oldest boy—that one they call Buddy—he heard a cowbell over in the swamp and so he went to look; Bristow's got cows, as you know, and one or two of 'em is belled. And he kept on followin' after the sound of it till he got way down into the thickest part of them cypress slashes that's near the middle there; and right there he run acrost it—this body.

"But, suh, squire, it wasn't no cow at all. No, suh; it was a buzzard with a cowbell on his neck—that's what it was. Yes, suh; that there same old Bell Buzzard he's come back agin and is hangin' round. They tell me he ain't been seen round here sence the year of the yellow fever—I don't remember myself, but that's whut they tell me. The niggers over on the other side are right smartly worked up over it. They say—the niggers do—that when the Belled Buzzard comes, it's a sign of bad luck for somebody, shore!"

The constable drove on, talking on, garrulous as a guinea-hen. The squire didn't heed him. Hunched back in the buggy, he hearkened only to those busy inner voices filling his mind with thundering portents. Even so, his ear was first to catch above the rattle of the buggy wheels the far-away, faint tonk-tonk! They were about half-way to Bristow's place then. He gave no sign, and it was perhaps half a minute before his companion heard it too.

The constable jerked the horse to a standstill and craned his neck over his shoulder.

"Well, by doctors!" he cried, "if there ain't the old scoundrel now, right here behind us! I kin see him plain as day—he's got an old cowbell hitched to his neck; and he's shy a couple of feathers out of one wing. By doctors, that's somethin' you won't see every day! In all my born days I ain't never seen the beat of that!"

Squire Gathers did not look; he only cowered back farther under the buggy top. In the pleasing excitement of the moment his companion took no heed, though, of anything except the Belled Buzzard.

"Is he followin' us?" asked the squire in a curiously flat, weighted voice.

"Which—him?" answered the constable, still stretching his neck. "No, he's gone now—gone off to the left—just a-zoonin', like he'd done forgot somethin'."

And Bristow's place was to the left! But there might still be time. To get the inquest over and the body underground—those were the main things. Ordinarily humane in his treatment of stock, Squire Gathers urged the constable to greater speed. The horse was lathered, and his sides heaved wearily as they pounded across the

bridge over the creek which was the outlet to the swamp and emerged from a patch of woods in sight of Bristow's farm buildings.

The house was set on a little hill among cleared fields, and was in other respects much like the squire's own house except that it was smaller and not so well painted. There was a wide yard in front with shade trees and a lye hopper and a well-box, and a paling fence with a stile in it instead of a gate. At the rear, behind a clutter of outbuildings—a barn, a smokehouse, and a corncrib—was a little peach orchard, and flanking the house on the right there was a good-sized cowyard, empty of stock at this hour, with feed-racks ranged in a row against the fence. A two-year-old negro child, bareheaded and barefooted and wearing but a single garment, was grubbing busily in the dirt under one of these feed-racks.

To the front fence a dozen or more riding-horses were hitched, flicking their tails at the flies ; and on the gallery men in their shirt sleeves were grouped. An old negro woman, with her head tied in a bandanna and a man's old slouch hat perched upon the bandanna, peeped out from behind a corner. There were gaunt hound dogs wandering about, sniffing uneasily.

Before the constable had the horse hitched the squire was out of the buggy and on his way up the footpath, going at a brisker step than the squire usually travelled. The men on the porch hailed him gravely and ceremoniously, as befitting an occasion of solemnity. Afterward some of them recalled the look in his eye ; but at the moment they noted it—if they noted it at all—subconsciously.

For all his haste the squire, as was also remembered later, was almost the last to enter the door ; and before he did enter he halted and searched the flawless sky as though for signs of rain. Then he hurried on after the others, who clumped single file along a narrow little hall, the bare, uncarpeted floor creaking loudly under their heavy farm shoes, and entered a good-sized room that had in it, among other things, a high-piled feather bed and a cottage organ—Bristow's best room, now to be placed at the disposal of the law's representatives for the inquest. The squire took the largest chair and drew it to the very centre of the room, in front of a fireplace, where the grate was banked with withering asparagus ferns. The constable took his place formally at one side of the presiding official. The others sat or stood about where they could find room—all but six of them whom the squire picked for his coroner's jury, and who backed themselves against the wall.

The squire showed haste. He drove the preliminaries forward with a sort of tremulous insistence. Bristow's wife brought a bucket of fresh drinking-water and a gourd, and almost before she was out of the room and the door closed behind her the squire had sworn his jurors and was calling the first witness, who it seemed likely would also be the only witness—Bristow's oldest boy. The boy wriggled in confusion as he sat on a cane-bottomed chair facing the old magis-

trate. All there, barring one or two, had heard his story a dozen times already, but now it was to be repeated under oath ; and so they bent their heads, listening as though it were a brand-new tale. All eyes were on him ; none were fastened on the squire as he, too, gravely bent his head, listening—listening.

The witness began—but had no more than started when the squire gave a great, screeching howl and sprang from his chair and staggered backward, his eyes popped and the pouch under his chin quivering as though it had a separate life all its own. Startled, the constable made toward him and they struck together heavily and went down—both on their all fours—right in front of the fireplace.

The constable scrambled free and got upon his feet, in a squat of astonishment, with his head craned ; but the squire stayed upon the floor, face downward, his feet flopping among the rustling asparagus greens—a picture of slavering animal fear. And now his gagging screech resolved itself into articulate speech.

" I done it ! " they made out his shrieked words. " I done it ! I own up—I killed him ! He aimed fur to break up my home and I tolled him off into Niggerwool and killed him ! There's a hole in his back if you'll look fur it. I done it—oh, I done it—and I'll tell everything jest like it happened if you'll jest keep that thing away from me ! Oh, my Lawdy ! Don't you hear it ? It's a comin' clos'ter and clos'ter—it's a-comin' after me ! Keep it away——" His voice gave out and he buried his head in his hands and rolled upon the gaudy carpet.

And now they all heard what he had heard first—they heard the tonk-tonk-tonk of a cowbell, coming near and nearer toward them along the hallway without. It was as though the sound floated along. There was no creak of footsteps upon the loose, bare boards —and the bell jangled faster than it would dangling from a cow's neck. The sound came right to the door and Squire Gathers wallowed among the chair legs.

The door swung open. In the doorway stood a negro child, barefooted and naked except for a single garment, eyeing them with serious, rolling eyes—and, with all the strength of his two puny arms, proudly but solemnly tolling a small rusty cowbell he had found in the cowyard.

BENJAMIN ROSENBLATT

B. 1880

ZELIG

Old Zelig was eyed askance by his brethren. No one deigned to call him "Reb" Zelig, nor to prefix to his name the American equivalent—"Mr." "The old one is a barrel with a stave missing," knowingly declared his neighbours. "He never spends a cent; and he belongs nowheres." For "to belong," on New York's East Side, is of no slight importance. It means being a member in one of the numberless congregations. Every decent Jew must join "A Society for Burying its Members," to be provided at least with a narrow cell at the end of the long road. Zelig was not even a member of one of these. "Alone, like a stone," his wife often sighed. In the cloakshop where Zelig worked he stood daily, brandishing his heavy iron on the sizzling cloth, hardly ever glancing about him. The workmen despised him, for during a strike he returned to work after two days' absence. He could not be idle, and thought with dread of the Saturday that would bring him no pay envelope.

His very appearance seemed alien to his brethren. His figure was tall, and of cast-iron mould. When he stared stupidly at something, he looked like a blind Samson. His grey hair was long, and it fell in dishevelled curls on gigantic shoulders somewhat inclined to stoop. His shabby clothes hung loosely on him; and, both summer and winter, the same old cap covered his massive head.

He had spent most of his life in a sequestered village in Little Russia, where he tilled the soil and even wore the national peasant costume. When his son and only child, a poor widower with a boy of twelve on his hands, emigrated to America, the father's heart bled. Yet he chose to stay in his native village at all hazards, and to die there. One day, however, a letter arrived from the son that he was sick; this sad news was followed by words of a more cheerful nature—"and your grandson Moses goes to public school. He is almost an American; and he is not forced to forget the God of Israel. He will soon be confirmed. His Bar Mitsva is near." Zelig's wife wept three days and nights upon the receipt of this letter. The old man said little; but he began to sell his few possessions.

To face the world outside his village spelled agony to the poor

rustic. Still, he thought he would get used to the new home which his son had chosen. But the strange journey with locomotive and steamship bewildered him dreadfully; and the clamour of the metropolis, into which he was flung pell-mell, altogether stupefied him. With a vacant air he regarded the Pandemonium, and a petrifaction of his inner being seemed to take place. He became "a barrel with a stave missing." No spark of animation visited his eye. Only one thought survived in his brain, and one desire pulsed in his heart: to save money enough for himself and family to hurry back to his native village. Blind and dead to everything, he moved about with a dumb, lacerating pain in his heart—he longed for home. Before he found steady employment he walked daily with titanic strides through the entire length of manhattan, while children and even adults often slunk into byways to let him pass. Like a huge monster he seemed, with an arrow in his vitals. In the shop where he found a job at last, the workmen feared him at first; but ultimately finding him a harmless giant, they more than once hurled their sarcasms at his head. Of the many men and women employed there, only one person had the distinction of getting fellowship from old Zelig. That person was the Gentile watchman or janitor of the shop, a little blond Pole with an open mouth and frightened eyes. And many were the witticisms aimed at this uncouth pair. "The big one looks like an elephant," the joker of the shop would say; "only he likes to be fed on pennies instead of peanuts."

"Oi, oi, his nose would betray him," the "philosopher" of the shop chimed in; and during the dinner hour he would expatiate thus: "You see, money is his blood. He starves himself to have enough dollars to go back to his home; the Pole told me all about it. And why should he stay here? Freedom of religion means nothing to him, he never goes to synagogue; and freedom of the press? Bah—he never even reads the conservative *Tageblatt*!"

Old Zelig met such gibes with stoicism. Only rarely would he turn up the whites of his eyes, as if in the act of ejaculation; but he would soon contract his heavy brows into a scowl and emphasise the last with a heavy thump of his sizzling iron.

When the frightful cry of the massacred Jews in Russia rang across the Atlantic, and the Ghetto of Manhattan paraded one day through the narrow streets draped in black, through the ertswhile clamorous thoroughfares steeped in silence, stores and shops bolted, a wail of anguish issuing from every door and window—the only one remaining in his shop that day was old Zelig. His fellow-workmen did not call upon him to join the procession. They felt the incongruity of "this brute" in line with mourners in muffled tread. And the Gentile watchman reported the next day that the moment the funeral dirge of the music echoed from a distant street, Zelig snatched off the greasy cap he always wore, and in confusion instantly put it

on again. "All the rest of the day," the Pole related with awe, "he looked wilder than ever, and so thumped with his own on the cloth that I feared the building would come down."

But Zelig paid little heed to what was said about him. He dedicated his existence to the saving of his earnings, and only feared that he might be compelled to spend some of them. More than once his wife would be appalled in the dark of night by the silhouette of old Zelig in nightdress sitting up in bed and counting a bundle of bank notes which he always replaced under his pillow. She frequently upbraided him for his niggardly nature, for his warding off all requests outside the pittance for household expense. She pleaded, exhorted, wailed. He invariably answered: "I haven't a cent by my soul." She pointed to the bare walls, the broken furniture, their beggarly attire. "Our son is ill," she moaned; "he needs special food and rest: and our grandson is no more a baby; he'll soon need money for his studies. Dark is my world; you are killing both of them."

Zelig's colour vanished; his old hands shook with emotion. The poor woman thought herself successful, but the next moment he would gasp: "Not a cent by my soul."

One day old Zelig was called from his shop because his son had a sudden severe attack; and, as he ascended the stairs of his home, a neighbour shouted: "Run for a doctor; the patient cannot be revived." A voice as if from a tomb suddenly sounded in reply, "I haven't a cent by my soul." The hallway was crowded with the ragged tenants of the house, mostly women and children; from far off were heard the rhythmic cries of the mother. The old man stood for a moment as if chilled from the roots of his hair to the tips of his fingers. Then the neighbours heard his sepulchral mumble: "I'll have to borrow somewheres, beg some one," as he retreated down the stairs. He brought a physician; and when the grandson asked for money to go for the medicine, Zelig snatched the prescription and hurried away, still murmuring: "I'll have to borrow, I'll have to beg."

Late that night the neighbours heard a wail issuing from old Zelig's apartment; and they understood that the son was no more.

Zelig's purse was considerably thinned. He drew from it with palsied fingers for all burial expenses, looking about him in a dazed way. Mechanically he performed the Hebrew rites for the dead, which his neighbours taught him. He took a knife and made a deep gash in his shabby coat; then he removed his shoes, seated himself on the floor, and bowed his poor old head, tearless, benumbed.

The shop stared when the old man appeared after the prescribed three days' absence. Even the Pole dared not come near him. A film seemed to coat his glaring eye, deep wrinkles contracted his features, and his muscular frame appeared to shrink even as one looked. From that day on he began to starve himself more than

ever. The passion for sailing back to Russia, "to die at home at last," lost but little of its original intensity. Yet there was something now which by a feeble thread bound him to the New World.

In a little mound on the Base Achaim, "the House of Life," under a tombstone engraved with old Hebrew script, a part of himself lay buried. But he kept his thoughts away from that mound. How long and untiringly he kept on saving! Age gained on him with rapid strides. He had little strength left for work, but his dream of home seemed nearing its realisation. Only a few more weeks, a few more months! And the thought sent a glow of warmth to his frozen frame. He would even condescend now to speak to his wife concerning the plans he had formed for their future welfare, more especially when she revived her pecuniary complaints.

"See what you have made of us, of the poor child," she often argued, pointing to the almost grown grandson. "Since he left school, he works for you, and what will be the end?"

At this, Zelig's heart would suddenly clutch, as if conscious of some indistinct, remote fear. His answers touching the grandson were abrupt, incoherent, as of one who replies to a question unintelligible to him, and is in constant dread lest his interlocutor should detect it.

Bitter misgivings concerning the boy began to mingle with the reveries of the old man. At first he hardly gave a thought to him. The boy grew noiselessly. The ever-surging tide of secular studies that runs so high on the East Side caught this boy in its wave. He was quietly preparing himself for college. In his eagerness to accumulate the required sum, Zelig paid little heed to what was going on around him; and now, on the point of victory, he became aware with growing dread of something abrewing out of the common. He sniffed suspiciously; and one evening he overheard the boy talking to grandma about his hatred of Russian despotism, about his determination to remain in the States. He ended by entreating her to plead with grandpa to promise him the money necessary for a college education.

Old Zelig swooped down upon them with wild eyes. "Much you need it, you stupid," he thundered at the youngster in unrestrained fury. "You will continue your studies in Russia, durak, stupid." His timid wife, however, seemed suddenly to gather courage and she exploded: "Yes, you should give your savings for the child's education here. Woe is me, in the Russian universities no Jewish children are taken." Old Zelig's face grew purple. He rose, and abruptly seated himself again. Then he rushed madly, with a raised, menacing arm, at the boy in whom he saw the formidable foe—the foe he had so long been dreading.

But the old woman was quick to interpose with a piercing shriek: "You madman, look at the sick child; you forget from what our son died, going out like a flickering candle."

That night Zelig tossed feverishly on his bed. He could not sleep. For the first time it dawned upon him what his wife meant by pointing to the sickly appearance of the child. When the boy's father died, the physician declared that the cause was tuberculosis.

He rose to his feet. Beads of cold sweat glistened on his forehead, trickled down his cheeks, his beard. He stood pale and panting. Like a startling sound the thought entered his mind—the boy, what should be done with the boy?

The dim, blue night gleamed in through the windows. All was shrouded in the city silence, which yet has a peculiar, monotonous ring in it. Somewhere, an infant awoke with a sickly cry which ended in a suffocating cough. The grizzled old man bestirred himself, and with hasty steps he tiptoed to the place where the boy lay. For a time he stood gazing on the pinched features, the under-sized body of the lad; then he raised one hand, passed it lightly over the boy's hair, stroking his cheeks and chin. The boy opened his eyes, looked for a moment at the shrivelled form bending over him, then he petulantly closed them again. "You hate to look at granpa, he is your enemy, eh?" The aged man's voice shook and sounded like that of the child's awaking in the night. The boy made no answer; but the old man noticed how the frail body shook, how the tears rolled, washing the sunken cheeks.

For some moments he stood mute, then his form literally shrank to that of a child's as he bent over the ear of the boy and whispered hoarsely: "You are weeping, eh? Granpa is your enemy, you stupid! To-morrow I will give you the money for the college. You hate to look at granpa; he is your enemy, eh?"

SEUMAS O'BRIEN

B. 1880

THE WHALE AND THE GRASSHOPPER

WHEN Standish McNeill started talking to his friend Felix O'Dowd as they walked at a leisurely pace towards the town of Castlegregory on a June morning, what he said was: "The world is a wonderful place when you come to think about it, an' Ireland is a wonderful place an' so is America, an' though there are lots of places like each other there's no place like Ballysantamalo. When there's not sunshine there, there's moonshine, an' the handsomest women in the world live there, an' nowhere else except in Ireland or the churchyards could you find such decent people."

"Decency," said Felix, "when you're poor is extravagance, and bad example when you're rich."

"And why?" said Standish.

"Well," said Felix, "because the poor imitate the rich an' the rich give to the poor an' when the poor give to each other they have nothing of their own."

"That's communism you're talking," said Standish, "an' that always comes from education an' enlightenment. Sure if the poor weren't dacent they'd be rich an' if the rich were dacent they'd be poor an' if every one had a conscience they'd be less millionaires."

"'Tis a poor bird that can't pick for himself."

"But suppose a bird had a broken wing an' couldn't fly to where the pickings were?" said Felix.

"Well, then bring the pickings to him. That would be charity."

"But charity is decency and wisdom is holding your tongue when you don't know what you're talking about."

"If the people of Ballysantamalo are so decent, how is it that there are so many bachelors there? Do you think it right to have all the young women worrying their heads off reading trashy novels an' doin' all sorts of silly things like fixin' their hair in a way that was never intended by nature an' doin' so for years an' years an' havin' nothin' in the end but the trouble of it all."

"Well, 'tis hard blamin' the young men, because every young lady you meet looks better to you than the last until you meet the next, an' so you go on to another until you're so old that no one

would marry you at all unless you had lots of money, a bad liver, an' a shaky heart."

"An old man without any sense, lots of money, a bad liver, an' a shaky heart can always get a young lady to marry him," said Felix, "though rheumatics, gout, an' a wooden leg are just as good in such a case."

"Every bit," said Standish, "but there's nothin' like a weak constitution, a cold climate, an' a tendency to pneumonia."

"Old men are quare," said Felix.

"They are," said Standish, "an' if they were all only half as wise as they think they are then they'd be only young fools in the world. I don't wonder a bit at the suffragettes. An' a time will come when we won't know men from women unless some one tells us so."

"Wisha, 'tis my belief that there will be a great reaction some day, because women will never be able to stand the strain of doin' what they please without encountering opposition. When a man falls in love he falls into trouble likewise, an' when a women isn't in trouble you may be sure that there's something wrong with her."

"Well," said Standish, "I think we will leave the women where the devil left St. Peter——"

"Where was that?" asked Felix.

"Alone," answered Standish.

"That would be all very fine if they stayed there," said Felix.

"Now," said Standish, "as I was talking of me travels in foreign parts, I want to tell you about the morning I walked along the beach at Ballysantamalo, an' a warm morning it was too. So I ses to meself, 'Standish McNeill,' ses I, 'what kind of a fool of a man are you? Why don't you take a swim for yourself?' So I did take a swim, and' I swam to the rocks where the seals goes to get their photographs taken; an' while I was havin' a rest for meself I noticed a grasshopper sittin' a short distance away, an', pon me word, but he was the most sorrowful lookin' grasshopper I ever saw before or since. Then all of a sudden a monster whale comes up from the sea and lies down beside him an' ses: 'Well,' ses he, 'is that you? Who'd ever think of finding you here. Why, there's nothing strange under the sun but the ways of woman.'

"'"'Tis me that's here, then,' said the grasshopper. 'Me grandmother died last night an' she wasn't insured either.'

"'"The practice of negligence is the curse of mankind and the root of sorrow,' ses the whale. 'I suppose the poor old soul had her fill of days, an' sure we all must die, an' 'tis cheaper to be dead than alive at any time. A man never knows that he's dead when he is dead an' he never knows he's alive until he's married.'

"'"You're a great one to expatiate on things you know nothing about, like the barbers and the cobblers,' said the grasshopper. 'I only want to know if you're coming to the funeral to-morrow?'

"'"I'm sorry I can't,' ses the whale. 'Me grandfather is getting

married, for the tenth time, an' as I was in China on the last few occasions I must pay me respects by being present at to-morrow's festivities,' ses he.

"' I'm sorry you can't come,' ses the grasshopper, ' because you are heartily welcome an' you'd add prestige to the ceremony besides.'

"' I know that,' ses the whale, ' but America doesn't care much about ceremony.'

"' Who told you that ? ' ses the grasshopper.

"' Haven't I me eyesight, an' don't I read the newspapers,' ses the whale.

"' You mustn't read the society columns, then,' ses the grasshopper.

"' Wisha, for the love of St. Crispin,' ses the whale, ' have they society columns in the American newspapers ? '

"' Indeed they have,' ses the grasshopper, and ' they oftentimes devote a few columns to other matters when the dressmakers don't be busy.'

"' America is a strange country surely, a wonderful country, not to say a word about the length and breadth of it. I swam around it twice last week without stoppin', to try an' reduce me weight, an' would you believe me that I was tired after the journey, but the change of air only added to me proportions.'

"' That's too bad,' said the grasshopper.

"' Are you an American ? ' said the whale.

"' Of course I am,' ses the grasshopper. ' You don't think 'tis the way I'd be born at sea an' no nationality at all like yourself. I'm proud of me country.'

"' And why, might I ask ? '

"' Well, don't we produce distinguished Irishmen ? Don't we make Americans of the Europeans and Europeans of the Americans ? Think of all the connoisseurs who wouldn't buy a work of art in their own country when they could go to Europe and pay ten times its value for the pot-boilers that does be turned out in the studios of Paris and London.'

"' There's nothin' like home industry,' ses the whale, ' in a foreign country, I mean.'

"' After all, who knows anything about a work of art but the artist ? and very little he knows about it, either. A work of art is like a flower, it grows, it happens. That's all. An' unless you charge the devil's own price for it, people will think you are cheating them.'

"' Wisha, I suppose the best any one can do is to take all you can get, an' if you want to be a philanthropist, give away what you don't want,' ses the grasshopper.

"' All worth missing I catches,' ses the whale, ' an' all worth catchin' I misses, like the fisherwoman who missed the fish and

caught a crab. How's things in Europe? I didn't see the papers this morning.'

"'Europe is in a bad way,' ses the grasshopper. 'She was preaching civilisation for centuries so that she might be prepared when war came to annihilate herself.'

"'It looks that way to me,' ses the whale. 'Is there anything else worth while going on in the world?'

"'There's the Irish question,' ses the grasshopper.

"'Where's that, Ireland is?' ses the whale. 'Isn't that an island to the west of England?'

"'No,' ses the grasshopper, 'but England is an island to the east of Ireland.'

"'Wisha,' ses the whale, 'it gives me indigestion to hear people talking about Ireland. Sure, I nearly swallowed it up be mistake while I was on a holiday in the Atlantic last year, an' I'm sorry now that I didn't.'

"'An' I'm sorry that you didn't try,' ses the grasshopper. 'Then you'd know something about indigestion. The less you have to say about Ireland the less you'll have to be sorry for. Remember that me father came from Cork.'

"'Can't I say what I like?' ses the whale.

"'You can think what you like,' ses the grasshopper, 'but say what other people like if you want to be a good politician.'

"'There's nothin' so much abused as politics,' ses the whale.

"'Except politicians,' ses the grasshopper. 'Only for the Irish they'd be no one bothering about poetry and the drama to-day. Only for fools they'd be no wise people an' only for sprats, hake, and mackerel there 'ud be no whales, and' a good job that would be, too.'

"'What's that you're saying?' ses the whale very sharply.

"'Don't have me to lose me temper with you,' ses the grasshopper.

"'Wisha, bad luck to your impudence an' bad manners, you insignificant little spalpeen. How dare you insult your superiors?' ses the whale.

"'Who's me superior?' ses the grasshopper. 'You, is it?'

"'Yes, me then,' ses the whale.

"'Another word from you,' ses the whale, 'an' I'll put you where Napoleon put the oysters.'

"'Well,' ses the grasshopper, 'there's no doubt but vanity, ignorance, and ambition are three wonderful things, an' you have them all.'

"'Neither you, nor Napoleon, nor the Kaiser himself an' his hundred million men could do hurt or harm to me. You could have every soldier in the German Army, the French Army, an' the Salvation Army lookin' for me an' I'd put the comether on them all.''

"'I can't stand this any longer,' ses the whale, an' then and there

he hits the rock a whack of his tail an' when I went to look for the grasshopper, there he was sitting on the whale's nose as happy an' contented as if nothing happened. An' when he jumped back to the rock again he says: 'A little exercise when 'tis tempered with discretion never does any harm, but violent exertion is a very foolish thing if you value your health. But it is only people who have no sinse but think they have it all who make such errors.'

"'If I could get a hold of you,' ses the whale, 'I'd knock some of the pride out of you.'

"'That would be an ungentlemanly way of displaying your displeasure,' ses the grasshopper.

"'I'd scorn,' ses he, 'to use violent means with you, or do you physical injury of any kind. All you want is self-control and a little education. You should know that quantity without quality isn't as good as quality without quantity.'

"'Sure 'tis I'm the fool to be wasting me time listening to the likes of you,' ses the whale. 'If any of me family saw me now, I'd never hear the end of it.'

"'Indeed,' ses the grasshopper, 'no one belonging to me would ever recognise me ever again if they thought I was trying to make a whale behave himself. There would be some excuse for one of my attainments feeling proud. But as for you!——'

"'An' what in the name of nonsense can you do except give old guff out of you?'

"'I haven't time to tell you all,' ses the grasshopper. 'But to commence with, I can travel all over the world an' have the use of trains, steamers, sailing ships and automobiles and will never be asked to pay a cent, an' I can live on dry land all me life if I choose, while you can't live under water, or over water, on land or on sea, and while all the king's horses and the all king's men couldn't catch me if they were trying till the crack of doom, you could be caught be a few poor, harmless sailors, who wouldn't know a crow from a cormorant, and who'd sell your carcass to make oil for foolish wives to burn an' write letters to other people's husbands an' fill the world with trouble.'

"'An' what about all the whalebone we supplies for ladies' corsets an' paper knives, and what about all the stories we make for the novelists an' the moving pictures an'——'

"We're at the Sprig of Holly now," said Felix. "Is it a pint of porter or a bottle you'll have?"

"I'll have a pint, I think," said Standish.

FRANCIS BUZZELL

B. 1882

MA'S PRETTIES

BEN BROOKS filled his mouth with mashed potatoes, pushed the emptied plate to the centre of the table, and kicked his chair back. It was Saturday night and he made ready to go to Almont. He ran his fingers through his mat of yellowish-grey hair, dirt-seamed fingers of a farm-labourer, as he went for his coat and hat on the nail behind the door. He had no team of horses to harness, not even a worked-out mare and paint-bare buggy, such as the " renters " went to town in. That had all gone long ago when the land went. He was no longer even a steady farm-hand. All that was left him was the old house with its garden patch, and the barn, which now housed a few chickens.

His daughters, Aggie and Josie, clearing away the supper dishes, looked at each other.

" Pa, you ain't goin' without seein' Ma ! "

Ben grunted, and started up the stairs. His wife sat propped up in bed, muttering to herself. On the little table beside the bed, he saw the pie-tin on which Ma burned mullein-leaves, and the old tin funnel through which she inhaled the fumes when she felt an attack of asthma coming on. Ben shuffled in the doorway and rubbed the back of his hand against his unshaven face. It might go hard with Ma if she started to wheeze, now that she was so bad with her side.

" Is that you there, Ben ?—Get me the little jug—over the door —You be careful, now—It's cracked."

She tilted the jug upon the patch-quilt, a brown jug, with cat-tails painted on it. She had won it in a race at the Fair, when she was Sadie Chambers and " keeping company " with Ben Brooks. Her bony hands moved ; her fingers felt about. She picked up a twenty-five cent piece and three nickels. The effort tired her.

" Put the jug back—Careful, now—You take them forty cents an' get them earrings—They must be fixed by now—Ma died in 'em. I want to die in 'em."

" Don't be a fool, Ma ! You ain't goin' to die. Didn't Doctor John say you was goin' to last longer'n me ? "

" I'm a-breathin' awful heavy."

" Don't talk like that, Ma. We got to have you." Ben put his hand on his wife's thin shoulder. " You wait till I bring back them

earrings of your'n, anyhow."

"Don't let that Sam talk you into spendin' any of them forty cents, now."

"Don't begin a-wheezin' while I'm gone."

His daughters followed him out on to the porch.

"Now, Pa. You come home early. You know Ma's sick."

Ben hurried down the path. It was a habit formed on the many Saturday nights when, because he took a glass, or at most two glasses, of beer, his wife's shrill "Don't you be a-gettin' drunk, now!" pursued him far down the road. But he did not turn around, when out of sight, to shake his fist in the direction of the house and exclaim, "You old fool!" Nor did he mutter, as he plodded on "The old miser. Don't I know? Ain't I seen her a-hangin' of them old dresses of her'n out on the line so's the farmers' wives 'ud think she'd lots of things? She's cracked about her pretties!" He did not even whistle to himself.

He found Old Sam leaning against the watering-trough at Predmore's Corners, waiting for him. Like two old horses meeting in a strange pasture, they rubbed up against each other. This was their way of greeting every Saturday night. On the mile and a half to town they did not exchange a word.

On the hotel corner, Ben turned to Sam. "Got a dime?"

"No. Have you?"

"No."

"We'll get a dime or two," said Sam.

"Editor Tinsman might have a job he wants done," Ben suggested.

"Or Ed Snover, or Doc Greenshields," added Sam. "Marb Brab might have something."

"I got forty cents Ma gave me to get her earrings," Ben confided.

"Have ye? We'll get a dime or two, somehow."

The two old men waited on Newberry's Corner. Marb Brab came along.

"Good evening, boys."

"Howdy, Mr. Brab."

Marb Brab went on without offering them a job. Editor Tinsman said "Hello!" to them as he crossed the street to his office. Al Jersey came along. They stepped out in the middle of the sidewalk, scuffled a bit, and laughed loudly. But he had nothing for them.

"I'd better get Ma's earrings, 'fore it's too late."

"Better wait a bit."

"No, I'd better go."

"If you work it right, mebbe Tibbits will take just thirty cents."

"Catch Roy Tibbits a-doin' anything like that!"

"Mebbe I'll get something while you're gone," Sam concluded.

Ben started up the street.

Charlie Wade, the photographer, passed Newberry's Corner, and Lawyer Moreland, and Ed Snover.

"Got anything?" Ben asked, when he returned.

"Let's go an' look in the drug-store window," Sam suggested. "Mebbe Hepplethwaite'll want us to turn the ice-cream freezer."

They walked up and down in front of the plate-glass window. Hepplethwaite didn't beckon to them. They heard the town clock strike ten—there was little chance of their earning anything.

Sam went through his pockets. "We ain't got nothin' we can borrow a dime or two on, have we?"

"Ma's sick. She thinks a wonderful lot of them earrings. If it was next week, when Ma'd be better——"

"You might say you just forgot," Sam interrupted. "Next Saturday night we'd sure make some money an' get 'em back."

"Ma's sick. It's one of her pretties."

"Let's go home, then," Sam grumbled. "I'm tired of a-hangin' around here."

They started for home. Farmers drove past them. A wagon loaded with three generations of Jeddo's good-natured, noisy, the laughter of the women and young girls sounding shrilly above the gruff voices of the men, clattered up from behind. "Hello, Ben! Hello, Sam! Want a ride? Tumble in, boys! Tumble in! Lots of room!"

The two old men shook their heads and tramped on. Ben did not brag of the exploits that ended when he married Sadie Chambers; nor did Old Sam talk of the Saturday nights when he, and not his red-headed son, was hired man of the Predmore Farm. They reached Predmore's Corners. "Good-night, Sam!"

"'Night!"

"I got them earrings, anyhow," Ben prided himself, as he went along the stretch of road. "An' I ain't had a drink. Won't Ma be surprised!"

Aggie and Josie came to the door when they heard Ben's step. "Pa! Oh, Pa!" they called to him. "Ma's dead!"

"Now, now, Josie! Don't say that! She ain't, Aggie! She ain't, Josie! Say she ain't dead!"

Mrs. Lowell was the first of the neighbours to come in the next day. She brewed strong tea for Ben and looked after the girls:

"Now you run upstairs, Josie, an' you, Aggie, an' get fixed. People will begin a-comin' soon. An' you, Ben, go put on that black coat of yourn."

Ben wandered from room to room. His daughters watched him. He wiped the face of the Swiss clock with his sleeve. He found the World's Fair souvenir spoon in the china-closet, picked it up and put it down again. He took the silver-handled cane that Uncle George had brought with him from the city, and carried it about.

Aggie turned to Josie. "See, he's already a-takin' of Ma's pretties."

"He'll sell 'em all for drink, now Ma's gone."

"Ma loved Grandma Chambers's earrings, didn't she, Aggie?"

"Yes, Josie. An' the jet beads with the locket on 'em. An' the Swiss clock."

"An' the silver pitcher-frame."

"An' Uncle George's cane with the silver end."

"Ma loved her pretties."

"Pa'll sell 'em all for drink, now Ma's gone."

They began to cry.

"We don't care for ourselves," Aggie appealed to Mrs. Lowell. "It's you ought to get something nice. You've always been so good to Ma."

"Yes, one of the nicest," said Josie. "It'd be such a comfort to Ma to know you got the best. Pa'll sell 'em all for drink, now Ma's gone."

Ben took Grandma Chambers's earrings into the parlour where Ma was lying in her coffin. "She didn't know, she didn't know I brought 'em home. Here they be, Ma! Here they be. See, on the coffin!"

Ben was moved by the appearance of the parlour, by the silence, by the heavy odour, that oppressive odour present at funerals, in rooms where windows and shutters are seldom opened. Mrs. Lowell had made everything beautiful for Ma's last day at home. She had brought all the best flowers from her garden and disposed of them about the room. Ben saw the white asters which Mrs. Lowell had piled upon Ma's rocker and set at the head of the coffin; the "store flowers" brought by Undertaker Hopkins that she had placed upon the coffin-lid; the pitcher of cosmos beside the family Bible on the little stand in the window; the zinnias on the marble-topped table in the corner; the dahlias on the window-sills; the stray asters and cornflowers pinned to the curtains; the sweet alyssum twined around the picture wire of Ma's daguerreotype—Mrs. Lowell had always been good to Ma.

Mrs. Lowell had brought chicken-broth and tidied up Ma's room whenever Ma was sick. She had been a great help to Ma when Uncle George came home to die. Now Ma lay in her coffin, white, with her hands folded over her breast. Ma would have a fine funeral. Mrs. Lowell had seen to everything.

His daughters were not like Mrs. Lowell. They didn't know how to make a room look pretty. Ben had hoped that Aggie and Josie would turn out differently, when they had been too young instead of too old to be married, and Ma had gone about the house singing. Now Ma was gone, and left all her pretties behind.

"Aggie! Josie!" Ben called to his daughters. "Ma loved her pretties. You can have 'em all. You divide 'em, I can't."

Aggie and Josie looked at each other. The pretties were theirs! What had got into Pa?

"Mis' Lowell ought to get one," added Ben. "She's always

been so good to Ma. The beads an' locket, she might like that ? "

" Now, Pa, you better go into the dinin'-room an' lay down. You're so tired."

" Mis' Lowell's always been good to Ma," Ben repeated.

" You're so tired, Pa. Go lay down on the lounge."

They watched him shuffle out of the room, and waited until they heard the springs of the lounge creak under his weight. They knew there were pretties in Ma's bureau that Pa had forgotten about. They started up the stairs, treading carefully, and keeping close together. They reached Ma's door. Aggie turned the door-knob with both hands and stepped softly into the room, with Josie close behind her. They left the door open so that they might hear Pa better. They opened the closet door, hesitated, looked in. There was Ma's bureau. They tried the two top drawers. They were locked.

" The keys, Josie ! Where be the keys ? "

" Ma kept 'em rolled up in a stockin'."

" We'll find 'em."

They opened the next drawer, filled with Ma's " best " clothes—the Paisley shawl, Ma's " best " silk dress, the dress of Henrietta cloth, the cashmere dress, Ma's " best " muslin dress, and the red flannel skirt edged with lace knit out of red yarn.

Both pulled at the third drawer. It flew open. Balls of yarn—pink, green, red, yellow, blue, of various sizes, left over from many quiltings, rolled out upon the floor. They felt about for rolled-up stockings, in the cotton-batting, under the piles of aprons, between the folds of babies' clothing.

" Them be ours, Aggie."

" Where be them stockin's ? "

They opened the fourth drawer. Their hands threshed about, ran into each other, tumbled the contents. They straightened up and looked at the shelves.

" They wouldn't be in them boxes, would they, Josie ? "

" The basket ! Let's try that."

They took down the large, clean, basswood market-basket. Josie lifted the hinged cover. They found Ma's white wool " fascinator " hood, a pair of woollen leggings, Ma's " best " knit slippers, a thick brown veil, and a pair of black woollen mittens.

" Here be the stockin's."

They upset the basket. In a rolled-up pair of grey woollen stockings Josie found the keys.

" Give 'em to me. Go an' look, Josie. Pa may be a-comin'."

" No, we'd hear 'im. Open the drawer, Aggie, the right-hand one."

They saw the lacquer box and the red leather purse that Uncle George had brought Ma from the city. Aggie took the purse. Ma used to keep her money in it. But it was empty. The lacquer box

held Grandma Chambers's things. They lifted out carefully the shawl of Spanish lace, a small Bible with a gold clasp, six worn silver spoons, a coral cameo breast-pin, a piece of thin gold chain, and Grandma Chambers's jet beads with the locket.

"The idea of Pa's wantin' to give away Grandma Chambers's beads an' locket," said Aggie. "The idea!"

"It's just like Pa. He ain't to be trusted."

"Now that locket, that locket 'ud look right smart on you, Josie. Ma'd be glad you had it, I know. An' Ma'd like me to have Grandma Chambers's earrings."

"You'll own three spoons, Aggie, an' I'll own the other three. Mebbe the lace shawl 'ud look best on me?"

"I'll have the Bible, an' you can have the cameo pin. We'll find something for Mis' Lowell."

The upper left-hand drawer was filled with many small pasteboard boxes, one on top of the other. One of them held Ma's "best" switch—grey, like her own hair—with the side-comb and bone hairpins in place. They took out the comb and pins. In a little box within a box they found an old needle-book that had belonged to Ma's grandmother. From another box they took a black switch, worn before Ma's hair turned. Josie thought it might come in handy. In other boxes were several pairs of Ma's "specs," which she had put away as she needed stronger ones; Ma's under plate of false teeth, which she had never used; a lock of some one's hair; several gold-plated breast-pins in the form of flowers; and a round locket that looked like a watch, with pictures of Pa and Ma, taken on their wedding day.

"You take the breast-pins, an' I'll have the round locket. We'll find something for Mis' Lowell."

They looked around Ma's room. Pa's bureau did not interest them. They took down the jug from the shelf over the door. Its contents rattled. They upset the jug upon the patch-quilt, and divided fifty cents between them. Then they went downstairs.

"The cane, Josie, you take that, an' I'll have the spoon from the World's Fair. Ma was proud of Uncle George, wasn't she, Josie? She'd want us to keep the cane, an' the silk hat in the grand leather case, an' the white gloves, an' the box with the cigars in it."

They went into the parlour, where Ma lay in her coffin.

"Them earrings are mine, now, ain't they, Josie? You got the beads an' locket. We'll find something for Mis' Lowell."

Ben heard them. "Hadn't I better take the pretty over to Mis' Lowell? She's always been so good to Ma."

Aggie and Josie looked at their father and at each other.

"Yes, Pa. We'll get it."

They went back into Ma's room. They looked around, at the top of the bureau, at the shelf over the door. They opened the door of Ma's closet, and closed it again. They saw the jug where they had

left it on the patch-quilt.

"Ma wouldn't want us to give away that patch-quilt of her'n, would she, Josie?"

"No, Aggie. That'll be good on our bed, cold nights. We'll give Pa the brown one. It'll be warmer."

Aggie took a ball of string, wound smooth and hard—pink and green string from the drug-store—tied end to end, and Ma's jack-knife from the pocket hanging on the closet door.

"You get a sheet of paper, Josie, from the bottom of one of them drawers."

They wrapped up the jug carefully, and went downstairs.

"Here it is, Pa. We did it up nice. Be careful now, an' don't you undo it."

Ben was pleased. It looked like a Christmas present. Mrs. Lowell had always been good to Ma. He took the South road to the Lowell farm. He saw a woman near the red barn. He felt of the parcel, turned it about. His fingers followed the outlines. He wanted to undo it, but he was afraid he would not be able to do it up so nice. The woman in the barnyard was Mrs. Lowell, feeding her chickens.

Ben worked open a corner of the paper, and inserted his finger, without disturbing the string.

"Mis' Lowell should 'a' had something nicer. It ain't good enough to be given for Ma."

He started back for home. "I ain't goin' to take that jug to her."

He took a few steps, then straightened up and turned about. His heart beat fast; there was a light in his eyes. He was young again, one of a big crowd, watching the girls' race at the Fair. His Sadie was leading them all. Everybody cheered for her. She ran right into his arms, and they gave her the first prize—the very jug he had in his hands.

He took the jug out of its wrappings, and hurried across the farmyard to Mrs. Lowell.

"I'm bringin' you one of Ma's pretties——this here little jug with the cat-tail paintin' on it——she won it at the Fair. She was Sadie Chambers then, an' she beat all the other girls, an'—— Oh, you ought'er seen how she ran!"

ADDISON LEWIS

B. 1889

WHEN DID YOU WRITE YOUR MOTHER LAST?

COLLINS was a bum. He roamed about the country on foot or abaft the rods of a wind-jamming freight car, summer and winter, a restless spirit whose sole desire was to get food enough to keep him alive and beer as often as possible. He never stayed in one place long enough for people to inquire why he hadn't a regular job—because engraven on his soul was a solemn pledge: "Never Work." If he had ever condescended to do a little manual labour, no matter how spasmodic, he would have elevated himself to the status of a tramp. A tramp will work, if there is no other way out. But a bum—never. He will sooner throw himself under a Mogul engine, and sue the railroad company for damages.

The lowest, the most good-for-nothing among us, say the psychologists, have some capability, some potential power, to do a certain thing better than the average of our fellows. Collins could hold the attention of a camp-fire gathering of twenty derelicts for hours at a time with his yarning. He was known as the best yarn spinner among the disorganized cohorts of Coxie's army from the Battery to the Golden Gate. They called him affectionately "The Ace-high Liar." His yarns, he swore, were honest experiences from his own life, but as a matter of fact, as all his pals knew, they were seventy-five per cent Collins' purple imagination. But they listened to him, and so passed many an hour otherwise weary and profitless. He could take them with him over the broad, cracked face of the earth. He could make them believe they were Alaskan gold hunters, explorers in the Uganda, English tars, seal hunters in the Bering Sea, plantation proprietors in Hawaii, Mexican arms smugglers—anything that came into his round red head.

In another stratum Collins might have been a successful writer of "red-blooded" fiction or thrilling scenarios for the movies. He had been the hero of a thousand unfilmed reels. He was a Lafcadio Hearn for description, a Jack London of narrative, a veritable Dickens for pathos. Nor is this saying much. Most every man has known some unheralded genius like Collins, blissfully ignorant of his own possibilities and therefore three times blessed.

One raw night toward the end of November, Collins and a pal were hugging a radiator in the lobby of the Salvation Army hotel in Minneapolis. Why they happened to be there I don't know. Where they had come from, I don't know. But they were there. And it was good to feel the hot pipes pressed against their shivering bodies. They were cold and hungry and miserable ; the joy of life had fled from their souls. Under their breath they cursed each other, God and the weather. The other occupants of the room were peacefully reading or pretending to read. But Collins and his companion were in no mood for reading. Their seared, yellow eyes roamed about the room. They craved whisky, raw whisky. It would ease their troubles and give them a temporary feeling of well-being. But they were flat broke, they couldn't borrow, and the days of begging had been fruitless. Their eyes continued to roam squintingly, maliciously. They hated the fatuous air of comfort exhaled by the rest of the room.

" Hell ! " muttered Collins.

His pal did not answer. Collins turned to look at him. A single tear was trickling down his unshaven cheek. He was a young man almost half Collins' age. His gaze was fixed on the opposite wall, and Collins, following its direction, encountered a placard in large letters : " When did You Write Your Mother Last ? "

" Got the homesick bug, eh ? " The other furtively drew his hand across his cheek. " Forget it ! " he said hoarsely.

" I don't blame ya, after what we've had handed us the last two days." There was rough kindness in Collins' tone.

" Forget it ! " repeated the kid. After a moment he added sullenly, " Guess I'll read. Nothin' else for a guy to do in this damned hole." He shuffled over to a table and sat down.

Collins hugged the radiator several minutes longer. Then he turned up his coat collar and left the room. He had decided to make another try at pan-handling the price of a drink.

When he came back his pal was hunched over the table with a pencil and a scrawled sheet of paper. Collins sat down opposite. A genial glow tingled inside him. His errand had been successful.

" Obeyin' orders ? " he asked jovially, raising an eyebrow toward the placard. The kid ignored him. He was writing feverishly. Collins sat still, regarding the placard with half-shut, musing eyes. " ' When Did You Write Your Mother Last ? ' " he murmured. His lips twisted in a bitter smile. He put his arms on the table and pillowed his head on them. The stillness of the room was broken by three soft sounds—the click of the battered clock on the wall, the heavy breathing of the readers, and the tap, tap of the kid's pencil on the paper. Five minutes passed. Collins felt a heavy hand on his shoulder. " You can't sleep here," said the room clerk.

" Eh ? " said Collins, " I wasn't asleep."

The clerk started back to his desk. Collins got to his feet and

followed him. " How much for paper and an envelope ? "

" Two cents."

Collins produced the coins. He went back to the table and sat down. After an infinite search he brought forth a stump of a pencil from somewhere in the depths of his being. He began to write. Slowly, haltingly with a prodigious effort the words came. His copious speaking vocabulary, adapted to the demands of a hundred varying tales of his roving life, suddenly seemed to have vanished before the task of composing a simple letter. It was years since he had written anything but his name. But gradually, slowly, the page began to fill with crazily-fashioned words looking like so many hen tracks. After a time, Collins glancing up found the kid's eyes on him.

" Who the hell you writin' to ? "

" Who the hell's askin' ? "

Deliberately the kid leaned over and read the superscription—" Dearest Mother." Collins jerked the letter away. " If you weren't my pal, I'd bean you for that."

The kid was shaking with silent laughter. " Writin' to your maw ! Forget it. Yer dippy."

" Who're you writin' to ? "

" What's it to yuh ? "

" Don't kid me, cully. You're writin' to yourn. There ain't no law 'gainst my doin' the same."

" Forget it ! " said the kid. " You never had no maw. Tole me yerself you was brung up in an orphan pen."

Collins failed to answer. He was suddenly busy with his writing. It was true, Collins had never known a mother. But that fact had never bothered him and it did not bother now. For his fervid imagination was aglow visualizing a perfect mother—*his* mother, to whom he was pouring out his heart in a badly scrawled letter—abasing himself before her love, which he was sure had followed him over his long, starved years of wandering ; castigating himself in the light of her certain forgiveness. He blessed her in words, wrung from the depths of his soul, that he had never revealed to any man ; begged her still to cherish her faith, that he knew had many times been sorely tried, for soon he was coming home. Home —to her.

The kid had long ago finished his letter and gone to his bunk, when Collins wrote : " Affecshunitly, your son " and tucked the letter away in his coat.

. . . . . .

It was only a few days later that Collins, attempting to jump the bumpers of a moving freight, missed his footing on the ice-sheathed metal and fell. He was badly crushed and died before he was found. There was no one to mourn him. The kid and he had since quarrelled and parted company. But he earned a front-page story the

next day in a great metropolitan daily. A shrewd reporter had come into possession of his precious letter, and it appeared in full, verbatim, under the title "Tramp Dies with Unmailed Letter to Mother." And many eyes in the great city blinked for a moment with suspicious moisture when they read. And several wanderers on the face of the earth recalled with a start the long time it had been since they had written their mothers.

Some of these, with the story still before them, half unconsciously reached for their cheque-books. And that evening before the type metal which had stamped the story on their awakened memories had been melted to be shaped again into the next day's murder, grand ball, or clothing advertisement, a little fund had been raised to save what remained of Collins from the Potters' Field.

So it came to pass on the following afternoon, a forlorn little undertaking "parlour" was made sadly gay with flowers from nameless givers, while "Spieler" Hanks, the leathern-lunged street-evangelist, said a few words above Collins' coffin in a voice strangely modulated.

When the kid many miles down the line read the account of this unusual occasion in a tattered, battered, week-old edition, borrowed from a brakie, he drew his hand across his tobacco-stained mouth and grunted in amazement.

"For de love o' Mike! Dat guy couldn't quit kiddin' even when he croaked. A whole town full o' weepin' nuts is just fallin' all over demselves paying respects to dat good-for-nothin' old hobo. Oh, Collins? Oh, boy!"

And he slapped his leg and went off into a paroxysm of laughter.

FREDERICK BOOTH

SUPERS

WANTED: Tall, good-looking men for the stage. Must be well dressed. Apply at stage door of —— Theatre at ten A.M.

THERE is a certain amount of irony in the above, such as, for instance, "Tall, good-looking"; "must be well dressed"; and the man who appears in the side street in the vicinity of the stage door at about half-past nine in the morning knows this, for he wrote the advertisement himself.

He is a thick man, with a red beard trimmed in the form of a blunt wedge, and cut away from around his mouth as a hedge is cut from a gate. He is a man with a cool green eye, immobile face, and distant manner. A man who walks slowly, is introspective, gloomy; who carries a big stick like Javert's cudgel and studies the pavement like a man of large affairs. He has the manner of a general waiting to review his army, which he expects to find decimated and run down at the heel. He wears a derby hat slightly broken at the crown, a little shiny on the edges; an overcoat with a collar somewhat frayed; boots that are rather square-toed and vulgar.

This combination of shabbiness and thoughtfulness lends him an appearance of sorrow—simple and primitive in the light of his red beard—as if he were telling himself and would like to tell the world: Here is a man of immense capabilities, fated to deal in small and absolutely rotten potatoes.

In twos and threes some men begin to come in sight from the direction of Sixth and Seventh Avenues. They sidle into the street that runs by the stage door; some of them cast at Red Beard a look of recognition and a half-nod, to which he is profoundly indifferent. Others fix their gaze upon the legend over the door as children stare at the entrance of a circus tent.

Little by little the straggling and deliberate comers make a scattered crowd. The catchings of the advertisement agglomerate and blacken the middle of the street.

They stand stock-still. As a concourse of men they are, all in all, voiceless and apathetic; before the momentary flurry of some traffic in the street they are brushed aside as dry leaves. There is a shuffling of feet on the asphalt as of dry leaves hurried along by the wind.

There seems to be an understanding among these men, as if this were not their first venture in such an enterprise. And there seems to be an understanding between them and the man with the cane: he appears, by the casual oblique glance, by the turned shoulder, to know them, where they came from, what he can do with them; and to feel the indifference of the dealer for his stock-in-trade. He wrote the ad. Here are the men. It is the same as ordering coal and seeing it dumped upon the sidewalk.

The scattered crowd had become a mob, a quiet mob that pushes gently, elbows itself without offence, waits.

Tall? Well-dressed? There are tall men, but their heads move in a sea of men that are short, men that are stooped. There may be well-dressed men, but they are hidden among men with shabby clothes. They are of all ages, but of the same condition. There may be seen grey heads, like patches of white wool in a flock of black sheep.

From a distance this small mass of humanity, held in abeyance by a single purpose, appears to be wholly silent, its attention, if not its glance, controlled by the simple potency of the stage door; but coming closer one may hear sounds that are words gutturally spoken, and a desultory murmur that resolves itself into a dialogue of many parts. Is there any stratum of society that does not have its shop talk? In every one, its atoms, akin, are stretching back and forth those little tentacles of question and answer, of seeking to know, of seeking to tell, that hold them together.

"Wher' wus you last week?"

"T' Newark wit' Mantell."

"Any good?"

"Nix. Rotten. One night y' play an' th' next y' don't an' y' gotta . . ."

"How many do they want here?"

"I dunno, it's a rotten bizness; not'ing in this bizness no more. I'm goin' t'. . ."

"Hey, y' rummy, git offa my foot. Whaddaya t'ink I yam?"

A sinister sort of meekness controls these men; hold men patient who are hard of face; docile who seem to be cut for any sort of business; pathetically anxious who seem to be cast for any rough hazard.

These are the men who may be seen on park benches; at saloon corners; who accost passers in the name of charity; who carry restaurant signs; who may be seen every morning at newspaper offices eagerly scanning the want columns; who carry a newspaper as if it were something precious; who hurry along with a sidelong gait; whose shoes make a sliding noise on the pavement.

These are men unshaven of face, pallid of complexion. Some of them wear overcoats turned up at the collar, sagging at the skirt with a rag-tag of frayed lining showing; bulging at the pocket with

some unimaginable personal freight. Some of them wear no overcoats, some no vests, others no collars. Some, with short, shrunken trousers, show bare red ankles. There are trousers that have settled into fixed folds about the shoes as if they had not been doffed or pulled up for some nights. The feet point out at a loutish angle, or point in pigeonwise. There are flat feet, feet broken at the instep, spread out like a duck's—oozing damp, hideous and evidently filthy, stub-ended, low in the instep, too large. They shift, shuffle, and twist about like wounded and helpless members. The hands that go with them are red and dirty; they are rubbed against trousers impotently, for want of something better to do. These men stand with the necks habitually drawn into their collars, their shoulders hunched. They have an unhealthy colour and they speak in voices coarsened by whisky and by the weather. They crane at the door like beggars waiting for a hand-out.

It is ten o'clock. Red Beard has forsaken the sidewalk and is standing on a box or something at the stage door, looking at the findings of his advertisement. He scowls heavily and appears to be disgusted with what he sees.

The crowd edges closer. Those on the outside push those within. The crowd becomes a pack. Necks crane upwards. A hoarse voice meant to be jocular wheezes:

"Hey, bo, y' want me, don't y's? Ain't I t' cheese?"

A laugh swells up, but dies instantly before the sardonic sneer under Red Beard's hedge. Some one says: "Huh, wot 'd'yu's t'ink you are, a primy donny star?"

Red Beard's jaw moves and he is heard to mutter:

"Gawd, what a rotten bunch!"

A uniform pushing and shoving begins. A clownish, uncouth eagerness manifests itself and animates the crowd. It is as if they were scrambling for apples. The scuffling of feet sounds like an unrhythmic dance. On the outside gaunt, bent legs push to get in. On the inside, in the middle of the jam, scrawny necks stretch up, heads stare.

A hoarse clacking murmur, resembling more than anything else the quacking of geese going to water, is evidence of a certain sort of talk going on within the confines of the crowd. It runs in a monotone and reveals no anger, no impatience, none of the mob frenzy that might be expected here. A futile eagerness!

Already the man on the box has begun to exercise his authority. He holds in his hand a card which he consults with knitted brows, and from which his glance shoots quickly, like an accusation, at the men. He points at one man in the thick of the press.

"You there," he says, "you wop wit' t' dent in your nose, I want youse."

As the lucky one shoves forward the crowd is forced apart as logs are pried apart by a canthook.

" Youse guys stand back," bawls Red Beard. The stage door is opened by some one whose face shows through the dirty glass and the first super fights his way within.

Red Beard's club-like finger is periodically brandished at the pack ; his voice of brass names some candidate by any ill-favoured mark he can see, and that one is cut out as a steer is cut out of the herd.

It seems that some definite programme is being followed : some planned chiaroscuro of the stage is being sketched in : broad shoulders and tall frames are at a premium, but shrunk figures, hairy faces and loutish manners are nailed by the Captain of this peculiar industry ; old men with long beards have their innings.

The crowd imperceptibly draws together at the edges as the middle is gutted and the ill-hued flowers of the flock are plucked.

At last some at the outside begin to straggle from the press. They light cigarettes which hang like appendages from their lips ; some of them whistle ; some dance a tentative hop. Thus they make light of their bootless quest " for a job."

Suddenly the man on the box waves his hand and says : " That's all ; youse guys come back here tomorry morning," hops from his perch and disappears within the theatre.

The largest number of those who came are still on the street. Collectively they present the appearance of a dog licking his chops after some morsel snatched away. They gape at the door closed in their faces as if some one had gone inside with something that belonged to them.

There is some hesitation, some loafing about, then a policeman bears down and waves his club. The black knot untangles itself, tailing out into a long string that drags its length in two directions, towards the two avenues, thins more, parts in the middle and disappears. No face shows more than passing disappointment—little has been lost. Some whistle, others call to each other, empty phrases are bandied about by tongues that have lost the gift of tongues.

The scuffling of their feet more or less in unison sounds like a rope dragging.

FRANCES GREGG

WHOSE DOG—?

"HEY—there's ladies here, move on—you!" The tone was authoritative, and old John, the village drunkard, crouched away.

"I warn't doin' nothin'," he clutched feebly at the loose hanging rags that clothed him, "only wanted to see same 's them. Guess this pier's big enough to hold us all."

"Halloo, John, have a drink?" A grinning boy held a can of salt water toward him.

The quick maudlin tears sprang to the old man's eyes. "Little fellers," he muttered, "little fellers, they oughtn't ter act that way."

"Give him a new necktie; he's gotta go to dinner with the Lodge." A handful of dank sea-weed writhed around the old man's neck. "That's a turtle, that is," the boy went on, the need for imparting information justifying his lapse from ragging the drunkard. "There—swimming round—it's tied to that stake. You orter've seen it at low tide when it was on the beach. It weighs ninety pounds."

"I seen a turtle onct," the drunkard quavered. "It was bigger'n that. En they tied it to a stake—en it swam round—en it swam round——" His sodden brain clutched for something more to say, some marvel with which to hold the interest of the gathered boys. It was good to talk. If only they would let him talk to them. If only they would let him sit on the store porch and smoke and gossip. He wouldn't be the town disgrace——

"Well—go on—what 'd 't do?"

"Hey you!"—the boys were interrupted by the authoritative voice—"I told you to move on, didn't I—now if I tell you again I'll run you in. D' yer hear? What you boys let that old bum hang around you for anyway? What's he doin' here?"

"Aw, he's fun. He warn't doin' nothin'. He was just awatchin' it swim. It's tied to that post. It don't come up no more."

"Watchin' it swim, eh, was he? A'right. Whose dog is it?" The officer turned and sauntered away.

Sudden horror seized the old man. The liquor seemed drained out of his veins: his brain worked almost quickly. "Whose dog—whose dog? Say!" he darted after the retreating boys. "Say—that ain't no dog—is it—no *dog*? Tied up like that to drown —say——"

"Aw—keep off—I told you onct—it's a turtle for the Lodge dinner." The boy shook himself free.

The old man stood a moment, shaken. His pulpy brain worked dimly toward the conception of the pain that was consuming him. "Whose dog—" that man had asked—and he hadn't meant to help it—"whose dog?" They could do it—tie up a dog to drown in sight of people—like that—cruel. He saw the policeman coming toward him again. In a sudden frenzy he clutched his tattered garments about him and began to run, to run toward the end of the pier.

The boys raced after him. "What yer gonter do?" they shouted. "What yer gonter do?"

The old man turned and looked at them a moment with twitching features. "I'm gonter die," he said.

"Come on, you fellars—come on—the drunk's gonter dive—come on—he's cryin'!"

There was a splash. A surge of green filth and mud spread and dyed the water. A row of expectant heads leaned over the rail. "Say—he ain't come up." They waited.

The policeman strolled leisurely down in response to their repeated cries. "*Who* ain't come up? What, him—the drunk?" The officer leaned lethargically over the rail. "What'm I gonter do? Why leave 'im. He ain't got no folks gonter sit up nights waitin' fer 'im. Now, you young ones, go along home to your suppers," he indulgently commanded, "and you little fellers, if you want crabs, be 'round here early. By to-morrow this place will be fairly swarmin' with them."

GUSTAV KOBBÉ

B. 1857

CLOTHES

Mrs. Graves at home ? "

" Yes, sir."

" Any one with her ? "

" Mr. Benton, sir. They're upstairs in the library, sir."

" Did Mr. Benton's brokers call up from the city ? "

" Yes sir."

" Did they get him ? "

" No, sir. He sent word from upstairs there was no hurry—he would call up the office later himself."

" Put some Scotch and carbonic on the table, and let Mrs. Graves know I'm here."

He went into the drawing-room. With a critical eye he regarded a tapestry panel over the door. Placing himself in a good position for light, he surveyed the paintings on the wall. Then he furrowed the rug with the point of his shoe, and watched the play of colour in the soft, deep pile.

He passed into the dining-room. The butler had put the Scotch and carbonic and a silver bowl with cracked ice on the table. But Graves first looked around here, as he had in the drawing-room. The panelling was English oak, intact from an Elizabethan mansion in one of the shires, with furniture and everything complete. The bowl and the rest of the silver on the serving table were of the same period. The room, like the one from which he had come, was in admirable taste.

He was very deliberate. Pouring out his Scotch, he added a squirt from the siphon, and listened to the tinkle of the ice as it floated against the sides of the thin glass, before he drank. Through the large, oblong window, with its heavy yet clear pane, he saw his garage and, in front of it, the handsome limousine, in which he had just driven up from the station. The lawn, with it's flower-beds and trees, made a fine expanse, as it sloped down to the river, where his yacht lay at his private landing.

Pausing again at the drawing-room, for a final and apparently satisfied look at the apartment, he stepped into the hall and took the lift upstairs.

" How's Archie Graves—' the coming man of Wall Street ' ? "

asked Benton, with the supercilious drawl that was one of the things Graves hated about him.

No two men could have offered a sharper contrast to each other than Graves and the man who was dawdling about his wife. Benton was spare, tall and rather languid-looking, an impression confirmed by his fair, longish hair, blue eyes, and weak mouth; whereas from every line of Graves' strongly marked features, as well as from his vigorous frame, spoke the determination of the man who goes ahead and doesn't bother about complications till he's gotten what he wants.

"Well?" he asked in a comprehensive way that included them both, yet ignored Benton's effort.

"We've been up the river in the yacht," said his wife. "After luncheon on the island we shot at a target. I hit it twice!"

"I thought you hated shooting. You always said you were afraid of the noise."

"Arthur—Mr. Benton, I mean—has a pistol with a silencer attachment. It's fine! You'd never know there was shooting going on. It isn't any louder than the snap of a whip."

"Yes," said Graves with a dry laugh, "that's it—the snap of a whip! You can blow out your own brains, or some one else's, without being heard."

Benton looked up.

"I've never known you to talk like that, Graves."

"Oh. I've had a strenuous day. By the way, haven't you had any word from your brokers?"

"I'd forgotten all about it," drawled Benton. "Chalmers called up. I was reading poetry to Mrs. Graves. Meant to get Chalmers on the 'phone when I'd finished. It went clean out of my mind."

"Better get him right away. There's been something like a panic in the street—a break in a whole lot of stocks."

Benton rose rather reluctantly.

"I had the usual margin with Chalmers. What's the use of a broker if he can't look after your business without bothering you?"

He said this petulantly, as he left the room.

"I hope nothing has happened to his 'Silencer' stock," said the woman. "He's awfully proud of his invention. Says England wants it for the army. He's going to give you a look-in on it."

"His invention?" Graves said this with a sneer. "He must have gotten that out of the poetry-book he's been reading to you. His father bought the 'Silencer' patent from the inventor and organised the company."

"Well, you know I don't understand anything about business," she said in rather a bored tone.

"Perhaps you can understand, when I tell you that I've come home worth half again as many millions as I was when I said good-bye to you this morning."

There was nothing bored about her expression now. She was

thinking of how much more money he would give her to spend on herself, and that made her look softer and prettier than ever. She smiled as she looked up at him.

"I thought that would fetch you," he said.

"You're a wonder, Archie. How did you do it?"

"Broke the market on 'Silencer.' Watched it tumble till it dropped far enough to suit me. Then grabbed up the whole lot—mine and his. While he was reading poetry to you I was wiping up the street with him. Couldn't go to the phone, eh? He's there now all right, hearing that he hasn't a dollar to his name, and to whom he's indebted for his haircut."

She didn't seem to grasp the full meaning of what he said. She was still smiling up at him, and looking her prettiest, when, from the hall below, there came a sound that resembled nothing so much as the snap of a whip.

The smile vanished. Her expression was that of a person who does not yet grasp the full significance of a sudden thing that has happened. She started to rise. Her husband closed the door and turned toward her.

"You can't go downstairs," he said, "In a few moments the hall will be full of servants. A scene before them would be fatal."

In a dull, hopless way she pulled at a tassel that hung from an arm of the chair.

"The butler," he continued, "being English, and the best-trained specimen of his kind that has come under my observation, will be here shortly to tell me, quietly, what has happened. I'll step out into the hall, so that you won't have to hear any disagreeable details, if there are any."

When he came back, she was crying softly. He pretended not to notice it.

"Before I left town this afternoon the Duveens called up. I suppose they'd already heard of the killing I'd made on the street. (Wonderful how they keep track of things, isn't it?) Anyhow, they wanted to tell me that the war has thrown the Thorpe Manor tapestries on the market, and there is a Reynolds they want me to see. The tapestries will go perfectly with everything in the drawing-room and we really need an English old master over the dining-room mantel. Some day next week we'll go in to see the picture and talk over the tapestries. After that, you might as well get your clothes for the summer—*carte blanche*—anything and everything you want."

The little hand, so delicate, so slender, that he held in his, while with his other he stroked her hair, still trembled. Every now and then her tears came in a flood, but he could feel that she was gradually quieting down.

"Couldn't I—get the—clothes—sooner?"

She still spoke between sobs. But when he said, "Sure, little girl," he felt her creeping into his arms to be petted.

NEWBOLD NOYES

THE END OF THE PATH

SET far back in the hills that have thrown their wall of misty purple about the laughing blue of Lake Como, on a sheer cliff three thousand feet above the lake, stands a little weather-stained church. Beneath it lie the two villages of Cadenabbia and Menaggio ; behind and up are rank on rank of shadowy mountains, sharply outlined against the sky—the foothills leading back to the giant Alps.

The last tiny cream-coloured house of the villages stands a full two miles this side of the tortuous path that winds up the face of the chrome-coloured cliff. Once a year, in a creeping procession of black and white, the natives make a pilgrimage to the little church to pray for rain in the dry season. Otherwise it is rarely visited.

Blagden climbed slowly up the narrow path that stretched like a clean white ribbon from the little group of pastel-coloured houses by the water. There was not a breath of wind, not a rustle in the grey-green olive trees that shimmered silver in the sunlight. Little lizards, sunning themselves on warm flat stones, watched him with brilliant eyes, and darted away to safety as he moved. The shadows of the cypress trees barred the white path like rungs of a ladder. And Blagden, drinking deep of the beauty of it all, climbed upward.

When he opened the low door of the little chapel the cold of the darkness within was as another barrier. He stepped inside, his footsteps echoing heavily through the shadows, though he walked on tiptoe. After the brilliant sunlight outside he could make out but little of the interior at first. At the far end four candles were burning, and he made his way toward them across the worn floor.

In a cheap, tarnished frame of gilt, above the four flickering pencils of light, hung a picture of the Virgin. Blagden stared at it in amazement. It had evidently been painted by a master hand. Blagden was no artist ; but the face told him that. It was drawn with wonderful appreciation of the woman's sweetness. Perhaps the eyes were what was most wonderful—pitiful, trusting, a little sad perhaps.

The life-sized figure, draped in smoke-coloured blue, blended softly with the dusky shadows, and the flickering candlelight lent a witchery to blurred outlines that half deceived him—at moments the picture seemed alive. She was smiling a little wistful smile.

And the canvas over the heart of the Virgin was cut in a long,

clean stroke—and opened in a disfiguring gash. Beneath it, on a little stand, lay a slim-bladed, vicious knife, covered with dust. Blagden wonderingly stooped to pick it up—and a voice spoke out of the darkness behind him.

" I would not touch it, Signor," it said, and Blagden wheeled guiltily.

A man was standing in the shadow, almost at his elbow.

He was old, the oldest man Blagden had ever seen, and he wore the long brown gown of a monk. His face was like a withered leaf, lined and yellow, and his hair was silver white.

Only the small, saurian eyes held Blagden with their strange brilliance. The rest of his face was like a death mask.

" Why not ? " said Blagden.

The monk stepped forward into the dim light, crossing himself as he passed the picture. He looked hesitatingly at the younger man before him, searching his face with his wonderfully piercing eyes. He seemed to find there what he was searching for, and when he spoke Blagden wondered at the gentleness of his voice.

" There is a story. Would the Signor care to hear ? "

Blagden nodded, and the two moved back in the shadows a short distance to the front line of little low chairs. Before them, over the dancing light of the four candles, stood the mutilated picture of Mary, beneath it the dust-covered dagger.

And then the withered monk began speaking, and Blagden listened looking up at the picture.

" It all happened a great many years ago," said the old man ; " but I am old, so I remember.

" Rosa was the girl's name. She lived with her father and mother in a little house above Menaggio. And every day in the warm sunlight of the open fields she sang as she watched the goats for the old people, and her voice was like cool water laughing in the shadows of a little brook.

" She was always singing, little Rosa ; for she was young, and the sun had never stopped shining for her. People used to call her beautiful.

"And there was Giovanni. Each morning he would pass her home where the yellow roses with the pink hearts grew so sweetly, and always she would blow him a kiss from the little window.

" Then Giovanni would toil with all the strength of his youth, and he too would sing while he toiled ; for was it not all for her ?

" Often Rosa's goats would stray toward Giovanni's vineyard as dusk came, and they would drive them home together, always laughing, always singing, hand in hand, as the sun slipped golden over the top of the hills across the lake. Sometimes they would walk together in the afterglow, and Giovanni would weave a crown of the little flowers that grew about them, and his princess would wear it, laughing happily.

" They were like two children, Signor. There were nights spent together on the lake, when he told her of his dreams, while the gentlest of winds stirred her curls against his brown cheek, and the moon's wake stretched like a golden pathway from shore to shore.

" They were to be married when the grapes were picked, people used to whisper.

" And then one day a new force came into the girl's life. The Church, Signor!

" No one understands when or why this comes to a young girl, I think. She was torn with the idea that she should join her church, go into the little nunnery across the lake, and leave the sunshine.

" She did not want to go, and it was a strange yet a beautiful thing. This young, beautiful girl who seemed so much a part of the sunshine and the flowers was to close the door of the Church upon it all!

" You are thinking it was strange, Signor.

" Giovanni was frantic—you can understand.

" He had dreamed so happily of that which was to be, that now to have the cup snatched from his lips was torture. He took her little sun-kissed hands in his and begged on his knees with tears streaming down his cheeks. And Rosa wept also—but could not answer as he begged. I think she loved the boy, Signor. Yet there is something stronger than the love of a boy and a girl.

" She asked for one more night in which to decide. She would come up here to this little church and pray for Mary to guide her. He kissed her cold lips and came away.

" He was a boy, and he never doubted that she would choose his strong young arms.

" The girl came here. All night she knelt on the rough stone floor, praying and—weeping; for she loved him. And the Virgin above the four candles looked down with the great, wistful eyes you see—and bound the girl's soul faster and faster to her own.

" And when morning came she entered the white walls across the lake without seeing her lover again.

" Giovanni went mad, I think, when they told him. He screamed out his hate for the world and his God, and rushed up the little white path to where we are sitting now, Signor.

" Once here, he drew the dagger you see beneath the Virgin and stabbed with an oath on his lips. That is why I did not let you touch it."

Blagden nodded, and the old monk was silent for a moment before he went on.

" Giovanni disappeared for two days. When he came back his face was that of a madman still. He was met by a white funeral winding up the little path. You understand, Signor—a virgin's funeral. Giovanni was hurrying blindly past when they stopped him.

" There was no reproach spoken for what he had done, no bitterness ; only a kind of awe—and pity.

" Rosa had died on her knees in the nunnery at the exact time he stabbed yonder picture. And they told him months afterward that her face was strangely like that of the Virgin when they found her—beautiful and pleading and sad. There was no given cause for her death—there are things we cannot understand. She was praying for strength, the sisters said."

The monk ceased speaking, and for a long moment they sat silent, Blagden and the withered, white-haired man, staring mutely up at the beautiful face above them. It was Blagden who broke the silence.

" What do you think happened ? " he asked slowly.

" I do not know," said the monk.

There was another pause, then Blagden spoke again.

" Anyway," he said, brushing his hand across his eyes, " she paid in part the debt Giovanni owed his God."

" Yes ? " said the monk softly. " I wonder, Signor ! For I am Giovanni."

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